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# Expressionism



# Expressionism

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# EXPRESSIONISM

## *Consolation in Goethe*

THIS essay has, as it were, written itself, for I confess to some surprise in finding myself impelled to write on the subject of Expressionism without any deliberate intention to do so.

For years I have been in the habit of lecturing at Danzig. I have grown fond of the people there and I enjoyed speaking to them. They listened well, giving the lecturer at the same time something which makes him more productive than he is usually. The sympathy of this audience vitalises him, their good-will draws out all his powers of expression, and though they are easily stirred and readily enticed into byways, they are critical, alert and quick to mock at him at the first chance, and so he is induced to take pains, and in so doing often surpasses himself. It has happened to me there, when delivering lectures on familiar subjects, which had become almost

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mechanical through repetition and habit, that I suddenly found a turn of ideas, and a new animation for which I could take no credit to myself, but, almost with envy, had to attribute to my audience, and to their exhilarating effect on me. For this reason whenever I have to lecture on a new subject I prefer to do so at Danzig. By the time I speak on a subject for the first time I certainly know it inside out, I know its *whys and wherefores*; I know what I want to say, and more or less how I am going to say it; all this, however, is still veiled by uncertainty. It is, as it were, unformed, and I do not know at all how much of it can be utilised and moulded into form. I am always curious about the matter myself. If I say nothing more than what I had intended at the beginning, I am not satisfied by any means, for while I am speaking something more should be added, which will surprise me, which at first glance may not even seem quite sound—until it suddenly appears to be precisely what I have been groping for unconsciously all the time. The same thing happens in conversation: it is so often only by having a hearer that one finds what one has been seeking in vain while one was alone. But of course the hearer must be adequate. In Danzig I always found this adequate hearer.

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The last time I was there, a town-councillor, Goeritz, who was the president of a club I used to address frequently, suggested that I should speak on the newest phases of Art—on Expressionism, Cubism and Futurism. Goeritz himself has a decided taste and a reliable feeling for Art; therefore, being sure of himself, he can enter into its every aspect, without fear of being confused thereby. And his people have such a firm tradition that he has nothing to fear for them either; no wind is likely to upset them, from whatever quarter it may spring. So this town-councillor rather enjoys giving them a shaking-up and, now and then, even a good tossing. They are a sturdy type, to whom one can safely present ideas which might be dangerous to more uncertain intelligences. They have a very sound constitution, they will even be able to digest Futurism! And my friend Goeritz is anxious to provide his town with everything that is good and of a high standard; no one shall need to go to Berlin to obtain even the very newest! Therefore, he encouraged me not to spare myself, and I saw in his lively intelligent eyes the gleam of pleasant anticipation that in me he was providing a drastic leaven.

After accepting it, the project weighed heavily

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upon me, for I had first of all to realise clearly what my own idea of Expressionism was. I had grown up under Impressionism; I was Impressionist before I knew there was such a thing. If, therefore, I did battle for Impressionism it was like fighting for my own life. And when I saw it threatened suddenly—no longer by the old generation, but by the new—I realised that the evening was drawing near for those of my generation.

I gathered from this that the time had come for me to learn to grow old decently. Those who had been young with me declined to do so, and it vexed me to watch their attitude towards youth and to find it just as foolish and unjust as that which the elders of thirty years ago had shown towards us. I blushed for us all. The first consequence was that I avoided meeting Expressionists. It seemed almost as if I were afraid they would consider me to be as dense as my friends. But I gradually conquered this feeling, for I told myself: ‘You must learn to accept the idea that your part is over; new people have arrived who supply the demands of the present, yet there is no reason why you should not look on.’ And this I proceeded to do. I did not understand everything about these newcomers, but

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I found nothing that annoyed me. I saw strong will at work with clean passion, and I had, even though I could not always explain the reason why, a vivid impression of fair promise. I had not yet gone further than this, when I had to begin thinking of what I was going to say to those people at Danzig! But was that not sufficient? Must everything always be explained? What does it matter after all to my Danzigers, whether I like Expressionism or dislike it and what my reasons are? What sense is there in pleading for or against a form of Art? What need is there to judge Art at all? I would rather show the Danzigers quite simply in what a strange predicament the friend of Art finds himself to-day; how this newest form of Art affects him, and what outrages him in it; why he believes himself to be threatened by it; what it is that seems endangered by this threat; what this newest form demands and why it demands it; and whether it may not intend thereby something that is now essential that must be undertaken, perhaps even something that has long been striven after, so that possibly, in this latest manifestation, the oldest Art expression of mankind may be recognised. All these questions had besieged me. I now wanted to put them to the Danzig

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circle and to help them to formulate the answer. And once more they did not fail me. I felt again distinctly how they helped me to master my own thoughts more fully. The atmosphere was pregnant, and when I realised that many found help, found, as it were, liberation, I determined to write down what might perhaps prove helpful also to others. So I wanted to write down exactly what I had said. But just here the unexpected happened! For while I believed I was simply putting down what I had said at Danzig, I soon found myself enticed away, so far away that I had to cry a halt, and had to turn back and begin all over again. I had scarcely done this when I again found myself on a side track, and this happened again and again—and all the time I had never expressed what I really wanted to say!

My address was finally so enmeshed and entangled in these digressions that even I could hardly recognise its original features. After all, it would not have been so difficult to restore it. I had only to cut off, or at least to bend back, the branches of my digressions. But when I tried to do this, it seemed to me almost a dishonesty. For I could not help myself; just that which apparently did not seem to belong to the subject,

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really proved to be its chief element. The original address had been clear and bald and plain; it had developed along a straight trunk and had never branched off, but in writing it down it grew into a thicket; a thick foliage of words sprouted up spontaneously, shading and complicating its structure. In dejected moments I acknowledged that I was talking round and round the subject. But I could not help myself; it seemed more honest to talk thus round the subject than to try to maintain barren lucidity; though I became indistinct, I was at least nearer the truth; and though I could not deny that I repeated myself, in almost the same words, yet it seemed as if those very words had every time a different significance, and they seemed to acquire their full meaning only when repeated often enough. There was no help for it, thus the matter had to remain, even though my conscience was not clear. My conscience, however, was soon reassured completely when I remembered a chapter of the *Wanderjahre* which had always been a special favourite of mine, and which now suddenly acquired quite a different meaning. It is the eleventh chapter of the second Book. Wilhelm writes to Natalie that he has something on his mind, and then the same thing

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happened to him as happened to me. He starts describing a youth who, walking alone on the shore, finds an oar, and proceeding in his search, finds other things connected with the oar, until finally, he can hardly say how, he finds himself in command of a goodly vessel well known among seafaring folk. Having got so far Wilhelm stops short in his narrative and has to acknowledge that his story has but the slenderest connection with the subject 'Yet paves the way for me to express what I want to say.' He then begins afresh, only to confess the next moment, 'As this is also not what I really want to say, I must try to arrive at the subject from some other angle.' He then starts off a third time and talks of his childhood. He describes the encounter of a handsome lad, the son of a fisherman, and a gentle maid, the daughter of some official, and how at the first meeting the lad feels a premonition of friendship and love. Here he pulls himself up, for he notices suddenly that once more he is not saying what he wants to say. And he complains in dismay and vexation : 'I have to confess that I have not yet reached what I am aiming at and that I can only hope to reach it by a round-about path. What am I to say? How can I excuse myself? In any case I would offer the following suggestion : If the



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humourist be permitted to jump about from one topic to another without any plan, while he boldly leaves his reader to collect and construe therefrom whatever meaning he can, why should not one whose intention is serious and reasonable veer about in various seemingly strange courses and leave his audience to collect the items and to focus them to the burning point of understanding?'

He cannot help himself in any other way, and she to whom he writes 'must abide in patience, must read on and on ; in the end the essence will suddenly be apparent and seem quite natural to you, which, had it been expressed in one word, would have seemed most unfamiliar.' This was consolation to me, although almost in the same breath, I asked myself again, 'Is it really a consolation? Does it not merely show that Goethe was aging? Is it not perhaps one of the signs of age that it can only circle discursively round its thoughts in blunted similes, instead of spearing them boldly with sharply pointed words? But no! Did young Goethe fare better? In a letter of Kestner's to Hennings (18th November, 1722, *The Young Goethe*, Inselverlag, Vol. II., p. 314) he says: 'In spring a certain Goethe from Frankfurt arrived here; by profession he is a Doctor

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of Law, aged 23, the only son of a rich father, and he is in search of practice—at least that was his father's intention, his own being to study Homer, Pindar, etc., and to follow whatever line his genius, his processes of thought and his heart may suggest.' And again : 'He has many talents, he is a real genius and a man of character, possesses a wonderfully vivid imagination, so that he usually expresses himself in images and similes. He himself is in the habit of saying that he always has to express himself figuratively, can never do so directly ; but as he grows older he hopes to be able to think the actual thoughts themselves, as they are, and to express them thus.' The young Goethe confesses then not only that he always expresses himself figuratively, never directly, that he can never express thoughts as they are ; he confesses that he cannot even think these thoughts directly, in themselves, that he even thinks figuratively. Only as he grew older he hoped to be able to think, and pronounce, the actual thoughts themselves. But when he did grow older he recognised that all our earthly thinking and speaking always remains figurative. Truth, even when present, is hidden. And the confession of Goethe becomes more significant when one encounters it almost verbally again in

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the young Augustine: 'And I was now in my thirtieth year and I still stuck in the same morass, greedy for the brief and diverting treasures of the moment, and saying to myself: to-morrow it will be found, it will make itself distinctly known and I will hold it fast.' When, however, the truth was given to St. Augustine by God, in that hour of exaltation with his mother Monica, when 'The Wisdom by which all exists was apprehended in an ecstasy of the heart by these two blessed mortals,' then he too recognised that in this presence all is silenced—'every form of speech and every sign' (Hertling, *Augustin*, Kirchheim, Mainz, pp. 28 and 55). And however small and inconspicuous a truth may be, to be true at all it has this in common with the highest truth, that it is greater than any thought or expression of man. It soars above us and has already passed our reach, we can but salute it hurriedly. And he who, by unwearied endeavour, succeeds in touching even the shadow of the smallest truth, finds that speech fails him, and he is apt to stand and complain helplessly with Mechthild of Magdeburg 'Now even my German fails me!'

Why then do we speak? Why do we write? Is it after all only an atavistic evil? But per-

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haps all talk, all writing is but a wringing of hands because of our inward distress. And everyone derives some consolation from seeing another wringing his hands also.



### *Taste*

Blessed are those who possess taste, even if it is bad taste, says Nietzsche, but who to-day can boast of this blessed gift?

That man has Taste who is able to react without reflection to a stimulus, though later on he may be able to support the action by reasons; yet these only justify his spontaneous verdict, they do not occasion it; it may even occur that such response is unable to maintain its cause at the bar of reason. He possesses Taste who is prompted at once to say 'Yes' or 'No' before he himself knows why. Again, only he has Taste who is sensible of distinct approval or disapproval without being able to help himself. But this faculty has gradually been lost by the educated. We have a special contrivance whereby to expel it; a so-called artistic education. The child, even before a work of Art can please or displease him, is taught what should please, what should displease him, so that his own feeling does not dare to reveal itself, but always has

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to ask the mind and its trained precepts for permission. The child believes its instructor who shows him some beautiful picture. It remembers what this beautiful picture looked like, and when, later on, another picture in any way reminds him of the first one, he infers that this picture must be beautiful also. The child has learnt from example what should please him, and as often as he is reminded by any other work of this example, he infers that this work too should please him. That which to-day we call Taste consists only of such reminiscences. Should he be suddenly confronted by a work of art that reminds him of nothing at all, he is scared. And if at the same time he is conscious of some feeling, his shock is greater. He no longer trusts his own feelings, he has been weaned from that habit. He therefore asks his mind for reasons. But he can no longer even trust his reasons. For in this the 'cultured' individual of our times has had a sad experience in his elders. He is afraid to make an ass of himself. He has learnt from his earliest years how the verdict of connoisseurs failed in every branch of Art. It despised Wagner; it despised Bruckner and Hugo Wolf; it despised Mahler, Reger, and Strauss, all those whom to-day he sees honoured as 'Masters.' He has witnessed the same treatment of Hebbel,

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Ibsen, Hauptman, and Dehmel. He knows that Napoleon turned in disgust from the first picture Manet dared to show to the public; that the Empress cried out in alarm, and that all the court was convulsed with laughter; and he also knows that to-day every picture gallery has to possess a Manet, and he knows what prices they command. He knows that Millet received a couple of thousand francs for his *Angelus*, and that the same picture was recently sold for 800,000 francs. He can prove the folly of his parents by figures; he would fain avoid playing the same rôle before his children; the idea of such a possibility frightens him. He lacks Taste, lacks personal feeling that responds spontaneously without needing reasons, without considering consequences: this has been expelled by education in Art. He cannot rely on principles and rules, nor trust in authorities, for he remembers the warning example of his parents. What is he to do? Nothing seems left to the unfortunate creature but fear; on it rests, one might say, in it consists, his relation to Art. If he expresses fear, he takes this as a sign whereby to recognise a real work of Art. That which gives him pleasure he considers inartistic, just because it pleases him. If he is to acknowledge that something pleases him, it must above all really displease him. From the

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fact that it displeases him, he surmises that it is a work of Art, and so he feels bound to assert his pleasure in it. Art is that which disquiets him, that which offends him, even horrifies him. He says, 'This reacts on me just as Wagner and Ibsen and Manet did on my parents, therefore in thirty years' time its greatness will be acknowledged, and I don't want to be called a fool!' For this reason the present age has a prejudice in favour of everything new; in this lies its contrast with the past. The Philistine of culture has turned completely round and faces in the opposite direction. formerly he stood facing towards yesterday, now he stands facing to-morrow; his chief characteristic used to be resistance, to-day it is defencelessness. One used to be able to recognise him by the fact that he could not be made to advance, to-day he is characterised by his belief that the advance is not rapid enough. He now prides himself on his endeavour to do justice to every new appearance. This is how he would put it; but the question remains whether justice can be done by one who estimates a thing according to its novelty. And this is the only landmark left by which he can take his bearings when dealing with a work of Art. He has been brought up to classify as a work of Art only that which reminds him of the samples

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shown him while at School ; fear has taught him to overcome this tendency, and so he can henceforth only believe that to be a true work of Art which reminds him of nothing he has ever yet seen. It must be something which has never existed before, and the horror he feels will immediately reveal this to him. For this reason too he will be enthusiastic over one *Work of Art* at one moment and unfaithful to it the next, because it can only raise his enthusiasm as long as it remains the newest form of Art, and because he is always haunted by the fear that in the meantime an even newer form of Art will crowd out his *newest*. Hence his irritation, because he has always the feeling of being cheated ; he is always searching for the last word, and none ever remains the last ; by to-morrow he may already have to renounce his love of to-day. Hence, too, the jealousy of these Philistines of culture amongst each other in their race after novelty, and this is enhanced by the fact that none of them believes that the other is *really* pleased with his latest discovery, for each privately considers every other creature of his kind a deceiver and a cheat—though to his own conscience he excuses himself by the dictum that no one dare lag behind the times, one must be in the swim. It has never before been so



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difficult, so strenuous, to be a Philistine of culture.



### *Offence.*

And now the man of culture is upset once more ; how can we account for this in what has been said before ?

During the last few years an amazed Europe could hardly recognise our erstwhile timid crew, who would only advance with slow and laborious caution, among the eager crowd which, to the special delight of Parisian Art dealers, rushed headlong at each latest novelty. But now we seem suddenly disenchanted, and the craving for all that is new begins to wane. The defenceless have begun to resist again. Once more there are pictures which enrage people ; they begin to grumble again ; nay more, the professional heralds and whips and prophets of fashion in Art fall away and disappear, or utter warnings and give signs of distress.

What has happened ? How have these Cubists and Futurists and Expressionists managed to bring us to this point ? Why do their pictures raise such rage after we had long forgotten even to be astonished at pictures ? Since Taste has long ceased to exist, how can any one be offended ? Or what

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is it that takes offence in us? It would now seem to be no longer a revolt of Taste, but a kind of moral revolt. We are ready to concede everything to the true Artist, but nothing to the charlatan. I have heard even the friends of my youth say this. Ah, dear friends and contemporaries, you make me wonder!



### *Humbug.*

People who for the last twenty years have been accustomed to trust my opinion of Artists are now furious with me, because I endeavour to understand Expressionism. To them this seems anathema! It is amusing, though in rather a sardonic way, to watch them fling about the same arguments which twenty years ago, when they were still young, their elders used against them. They do not notice that they are the old folk now. I, however, mean to remain young, at least in this that I cannot yet get myself to believe that the world must suddenly come to a standstill. It is curious how every one will allow history to develop only as far as his own arrival on the scene, it may grow and develop only up to his birth. Its whole aim from the beginning seems to have been only to produce him, and once this object is attained history is to progress no more.

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That it should still dare to proceed, and to advance even beyond him, seem scandalous. And here we are wrangling as to which of us is really the traitor. I accuse them of having been unfaithful to their youthful tradition, which emphatically demanded its own individual expression: a new age is to-day making identical demands. And they accuse me of attaching myself to the adversaries of Impressionism which until lately I had championed. But I still champion it. Its Art still represents for me the highest expression of the spirit of my generation. Yes, even more, it signifies to me the completion, the climax of all classic Art. We only differ in this that I cannot imagine that mine is the last generation of humanity. But if another generation follows mine, surely it will be a different one. As long as humanity does not die it renews itself, and no son will ever remain satisfied with the work of his father. Friday has a different task from Thursday, says Lagarde. To attain this we had to strive formerly against our elders. Do you remember this no longer? And now a new younger generation has come, and again demands the same right for its own task. You, however, just as those others did in the old days, want to have Thursday lasting for ever. And now you take up

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the same attitude towards the youth of to-day that those of yesterday held towards you, and you accuse them of the same follies that once so enraged your predecessors against you. Not one slander is missing, not even the puerile one, when at last you can think of nothing else, that youth is never 'serious,' but only tries to be conspicuous at any price, so as to startle and annoy the public. They are no longer mere fools, they are humbugs.

In Art there are always humbugs—perhaps more humbugs than artists. He who extends the meaning of the word far enough and is very strict in his demand for sincerity, can with a certain glimmer of truth put down even Praxiteles as a humbug, and—by comparison with the inwardness of Botticelli or Greco—even Raphael. The true puritan of Art can maintain that whoever tries to express inwardness always has to humbug and dissemble to a certain extent.

And this has no doubt occurred at times amongst Impressionists. No school, no tendency, is exempt from it; in all there is bound to be a certain amount of deception, of humbug caused by vanity, indolence, boastfulness, insolence, and often by the mere spirit of mischief. I would not care to assert that any Cubist is quite safe from

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this danger. No one is always at his best. Inspired moments are followed by exhaustion, lack of response. The stream of creative Art at such times becomes a mere trickle, and so he has to help it out a little. It cannot be demonstrated that he is not fully entitled to make use of a little assistance, a little humbug. Goethe never humbugged—scarcely ever. At times when there was a mere trickle, he let the merest trickle suffice unashamed. But it might not have been a mistake to have humbugged a little. For the work in hand it might have been an advantage. And one must needs be a Goethe to be able to think so little of one's work as to prefer always to maintain one's own purity; for the middle class, and still more for the minor artists, the work predominates: they falsify themselves for its sake, and they try to be greater than they are, or at least greater than they are at that moment; they try to do more than the opportunity allows.

The more one considers what humbug in Art really means, the more one questions the purpose of the artist, the more problematical it all appears. This, at least, is certain, that only the artist himself can tell whether he has used dissimulation, and where. Even the artist will not always be able to tell. And if he can tell, it is of no importance;

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for once he is conscious of deliberate deception, he suffers much less than if he deceives unconsciously. At times, however, there may seem to be deception when there is only helplessness; and, moreover, a helplessness resulting from an inner profusion, abundance. Poor artists seldom have this need, but the one in whom the abundance of the inner demand overflows, in his haste to grasp all, in his fear of losing something, in the stress of vivid sensation, can at times articulate only in confusion. What appears to be hastiness is really an attempt to flee, to escape from the all too generous flow of inspiration; and what seems to be incompetence is the purest purpose, which merely endeavours to do justice to itself. An artist can scarcely recognise this in his own work. How much less can an outsider do so! But the question goes even further. We must first examine whether, as far as the work of Art is concerned, we are not over-estimating the purpose of the artist? The devout artist is dear to us, and humanly speaking he deserves to be *as a man*—but should we judge the work according to the piety of the artist?

Nothing is more sincere, more elevated than home music as amateurs still practise it in little country towns. Beethoven, played with tears of emotion. The virtuoso who gives concerts in

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large cities can, at most, only weep at the competition. The former have the purer, even the higher intention, the latter the better fingers. There are solemn actors whose emotions stick in their throats, and others who, while the poignant suffering of their veiled gaze melts the hearts of their audience, are trying to outwit and upset their fellow-actors on the stage—especially the solemn ones—and to put them out of countenance. I would wager that Liebermann in all his life never experienced the emotion of an awkward maiden presenting a bunch of flowers to her grandmother, or a bashful bride tendering her beloved a cushion on which she has embroidered: ‘Ein Viertel Stündchen.’ Which is the genuine exponent? The amateur shedding tears over Beethoven, or the Virtuoso calculating his contract with his agents? The solemn actor or the wag, the bride or Liebermann? After all, what is meant by ‘genuine’? And when should an artist be ‘sincere’? In the fruitful moment of his first inspiration, or in the long hours of his execution? And where does inspiration end? When does it become representation, and must not each fresh presentation again become a fresh inspiration?

We are apt to become suspicious of an artist who creates to meet an external demand—what

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about Goethe, the poet of opportunity? We dislike the idea of an artist working to order. But Raphael and Michael Angelo, Greco and Velasquez, Rubens and Van Dyck executed commissions. Nowadays we play horrible, deceptive games with 'sincerity.' We have now come to this pass, that we begin to distrust an artist if he has any purpose, if he undertakes to do anything whatever. We want to overtake him wandering at night, to surprise the visions of the star-gazer; we ask for the noise-expert, the dream-artist, the illusion-monger! But Wagner, that noisy dreamer and eccentric-artist, after so many disappointments, sick of writing so many 'dumb-parts,' and almost driven to despair by his discouragement, one day in the middle of his work on the Ring decided to write an 'opera in the Italian style, something light and easy to produce,' and created Tristan. It is the creation that is decisive; whatever the artist intends to supply is immaterial, as long as he produces a Tristan. It is evidently not so important to have the right purpose as to possess the power which cannot be thwarted even by a wrong purpose.

Confronted by a besieging crowd of excited and greedy exploiters, Expressionism is as defenceless now as Impressionism used to be in former



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days. They percolate everywhere, and no one is spared ; one must needs be strong to stand the test. But why do they run after Expressionism and no longer tarry round Impressionism ? They are not delectable, but they have this one virtue : they sense the atmosphere ; they feel it in their bones when the weather is about to change<sup>1</sup> And, my friends, the weather *is* changing. Man himself is changing once more—he stood a long time gazing outwards, and now he is turning round and gazing inwards. You try to persuade yourselves that it is only a fad, a craze, a fashion. But observe the young endeavour isolated in the depths of the country which knows nothing of fashions and fads. It happened to me not long ago, in a small country town, that a girl came and asked to be allowed to show me her pictures ; she was not an artist by profession, and only painted for pleasure ; and at first her parents did not object, but the matter of her painting and the manner of it had so revolted all her relations that her father now insisted that she should give up a pastime which only brought herself and the whole family into derision—unless she promised to reform and paint sensibly. This, however, was impossible, for, with the best intention, she could not help painting as she did. And now quite bewildered

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and almost in despair about herself, she wanted to hear from a complete stranger whether she were really quite mad? I went to her studio, and it was strange in this little town, far away in the East of Germany, suddenly to feel that I must be in the heart of Paris. The young lady painted Matisse, yes, and even Picasso. She had never left her home; she knew modern painting only from a few journals. She had no special ideas, no theories about modern painting. She painted like this because she had to paint thus, and could not help herself. She would gladly have painted to please her parents, but, to her despair, she could never succeed. I was able to comfort her. I was in no way qualified to judge her powers, but I did know that only he is a true painter who must paint, who cannot help painting as he does, and who is willing to be hanged, drawn, and quartered for the manner in which he paints. She acknowledged with a wistful smile that this was her case. I can never forget that smile. One can understand a person in a great city trying to be conspicuous, to raise protest, scorn, venom, and thus create a sensation, for this reason resolving at any cost to paint quite differently from anything that had ever been done before, and in so doing hitting upon the idea of turning Impressionism topsy-

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turvy. But this quiet, gentle child of nature, far away from the world, who had no special purpose in her painting, who only wished to paint for her own pleasure, who desired neither fame nor riches . . . ! Twenty years ago she would have painted impressionistically—~~to-day she must paint expressionistically—~~she is *impelled* . . .

Why? Reflect deeply on this, my friends. And you may recognise perchance the meaning of Expressionism.

□ □

### *Reply.*

But my friends make answer: That *you* should have the boldness to give serious consideration to painting which is not painting at all, which only pretends to be! Pictures, which after long effort one surmises to be indications of roofs, blurred in the thick grey atmosphere of a large city, and which on consulting the title one finds represent a lady with a mandoline—well, one might forgive the layman. Do but read the programmes of these modernists. They wallow in manifestos. It is no longer a question of a new Art; they paint a new philosophy, a new religion, the dawn of the third realm! Our good, honest, modest Impressionism, dubbed by that maniac Denis

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an epoch of ignorance and madness, whereas they are painting the salvation of humanity! Read their Apocalypse! What bombast, what audacity, what hanky-panky! Are you so foolhardy as to attempt to interpret to us the prophetic vein of a Paris von Gutersloh? One sees a picture that one cannot understand, and then one reads an inscription that one understands still less, '*Kind neighbour, lend me your smelling salts!*' An honest painter, even if he cannot paint, at least does not turn that fact into a gospel! Or do you set out to defend the oracular magical spells of Expressionism as well?

I cannot deny that I too never feel quite comfortable when Expressionists begin to theorise. They are fond of speaking in a fog. Nothing is such a public danger as a painter who becomes 'programmatical.' And even when the programme partially suits the picture—which seldom occurs—even then it proves nothing. The programme comes into being as an afterthought; the artist does not create the programme, but rather seeks by the programme to explain his work to himself—for, often enough, he himself faces it just as helplessly, with as much perplexity as others do. But even if the Expressionists revel in dark proclamations, they can invoke our whole period which utters itself in dark

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sayings. I do not know whether they are right or wrong. But just at this moment I have lighted upon Buber.



### *Dark Sayings.*

Of late no German author has attracted me so much, or held my attention so firmly as Martin Buber. All that I read of him seems to me full of good tidings, to be a sign that perhaps humanity has once more come to a turning-point. He, Johannes Muller, and Rudolph Steiner, these three especially corroborate this fact. Humanity is accustomed to turn from one extreme to another. For a time it has looked to visible perceptible manifestation so exclusively that everything invisible has seemed to be non-existent ; then, as its custom is, it turns completely to the other extreme, to the invisible, so that presently it will hardly heed the visible any longer. A period like this is a kind of listening-in time, a listening to the great Silence where the voice of the night may be heard. Such a time occurred about a hundred years ago. And Buber often reminds me of Novalis ; so great a reverence for the unfathomable in which we seem so closely interwoven, such anxiety for the fulfilment of duty ; so delicate a shrinking from every faintest chance of wronging the soul, as are shown

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in his 'Daniel' have not been observed among Germans since the days of Novalis.

Buber calls *Daniel*, 'Conversations on Realisation' (Inselverlag). There are five—one in the hills, on direction; one of the city, on reality; one in the garden, on meaning; one after the theatre, on polarity; and one by the sea, on unity—all are conversations about the highest thoughts of which mortal minds are capable. For weeks this book has been a beloved companion to me, a companion one delights to listen to, because he seems always to be one's self speaking, and after all it is doubtful while he speaks whether one is not listening more to oneself, to the agreeable accompaniment of his voice, as is apt to happen when one ponders in a garden to the sound of leaves rustling in the wind. I often felt like this and it seemed an injustice to Buber. But when I tried to rectify matters and to force myself to full attention, and to impress my mind with the full meaning of his sayings, instead of just letting them 'rustle,' queer things used to happen. As long as I let each conversation act on me like music, I teemed and swelled with thought; as soon as I attempted to note each sentence precisely, I became confused. I had to read and re-read it three times, even four times, before I began to understand it. My Greek is no longer very good,

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but I can still read a dialogue of Plato's more easily than one of Buber's—I have to translate the one and the other, and Plato gives me a less difficult task. But why should I have to translate, to interpret a German book to myself?

I do not ask this question idly nor in a spirit of censure. I very much want to know why an author who has so much to say to me says it in such a way that I must first re-interpret it into other words so as to arrive gradually at its full meaning ; and he an author who is wise and competent and who cannot be suspected of wanting to play tricks.

I know another author who leads me to put this question—Simmel. His *Goethe* made a very deep impression on me. Having first undergone tortures, I read him with pure joy the second time, after that with redoubled pleasure, not only at the whole wonderful structure of Gothic aspiration his book embodied—but also at the fact that at last I could understand it. Soon after I met a friend to whom I communicated my enthusiasm about this book of Simmel's. He had read it and drew his mouth awry : 'After all, what do you find in it?'

I began hastily to draw the rough outline of Simmel's *Goethe* to him.

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‘Glorious!’ suddenly burst from him involuntarily.

I laughed. ‘Well then, what are you grumbling at?’

He flared up. ‘What is the good of romancing to me? There is not a word of such a Goethe in it!’

I fetched the book and proved to him that I had read nothing into it that was not very plainly there, once one had penetrated sufficiently into his methods to understand the book.

My friend then asked: ‘Now will you please explain to me the sense of expressing such important and compelling thoughts in the form of enigmas? If you can express his thoughts so clearly that I can at once understand them, why does he express them in such a manner that it never even dawns on me that the book contains any thought at all?’

I asked myself the same question, with especial reference to the pompous messages which Expressionists are so apt to deliver nowadays. Even then I soon succeeded, by dint of simply translating their Sibylline pronouncement into plain German, in calming the fury these announcements are apt to kindle everywhere. When Paris von Guttersloh speaks, it often sounds like ‘the Mothers,’ and no



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one realises that this artist, ever striving towards the best, usually says the most fundamentally wise things—only of course, in an absurd way. Why?

I asked myself that question, too, and at times I was inclined to condemn his clouded and obscure language. But I overcame this phase and I grew more and more perplexed, for I no longer seemed able to say which was the right and appropriate manner of expressing truth. Dark sayings annoy the hearer, but he who won't listen to clear speech at all, or fails to catch it—if the truth is made too easy, too comfortable for him, he will take no notice of it at all. This is especially the case with Germans, who take nothing seriously which they are not made to sweat for. Practically every really sensible idea that has been conceived since the beginning of the world is contained in the *Farbenlehre*, in the *Wanderjahre*, and in *Ottilia's Tagebuch*; since them, no new idea has been added to the sum. Yet who makes use of them? The most powerful, the most subtle, the highest and most delicate thoughts; thoughts so delicate and fragile that they are scarcely perceptible, so slender and evanescent that they can only be felt as they hover and vanish in the very act of perception, leaving the perceiver barely the fringe of their veil—even such thoughts Goethe holds quietly and articulates

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deliberately. In some of his phrases, the word really seems to go behind the thought, to penetrate right through and to touch for a moment in trembling awe the soul's deepest ideal, and thereafter to be suffused with its glow. But who makes use of them? When these parts are read people usually read over the top of them and the reader is greatly surprised when he is told what they contain. Sometimes, in conversation with a friend, when he imagined he was drawing up from the depths thoughts never yet conceived or uttered, I have referred to places in Goethe where the same thought was expressed, and he would not believe me. Even if I read him the passage he would not believe! Nor would he be convinced till I had translated it word for word into some kind of scholastic jargon. I had first to obscure the thought so as to make it clear to him. Our purblind eyesight cannot receive the full blaze of Goethe's clear language.

To be quite honest I too have done what he did. I too have fancied that I had discovered thoughts which I must long before have read in Goethe, but which I had not recognised there and for the obvious reason that they stood out too clearly. In the same way Kant is considered difficult only because he is too clear: he finds

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the inevitable expression ; we, however, are accustomed to be, as it were, rolled about and thoroughly shaken into some thought, before we hit upon its special point. Only after I had made up my mind to seize the full meaning of Kant's every word and to search for nothing further beyond its natural meaning, but to arrive fully at that—only then did I find him quite lucid, and I began to understand that his influence on Goethe was like 'stepping into a well-lighted hall.' Yet to-day it would seem that we prefer to think in a nebulous fog.

After all then, Buber, Simmel, the Expressionists are right, and the vapours of the mystagogue are an indispensable necessity' Dark sayings would in that case be necessary, for only in the darkness can the reader let his own light shine? Perhaps. For we have been brought up on such false lines that we need a severe shock before we can take in the true meaning of words. As long as a saying does not startle us we will not listen to it. Here is a theme for a German seminary: Fear as a necessary element of present-day literature.

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*Without Precedent.*

The various sayings and proclamations of Expressionism only tell us that what the Expressionist is looking for is without parallel in the past. A

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new form of Art is dawning. And he who beholds an Expressionist picture by Matisse or Picasso, by Pechstein or Kokoschka, by Kandinsky or Marc, or by Italian or Bohemian Futurists, agrees ; he finds them quite unprecedented. The newest school of painting consists of small sects and groups that vituperate each other, yet one thing they all have in common. They agree only on this point, that they all turn away from Impressionism, turn even against it : hence I class all of them together under the name of Expressionists, although it is a name usually assumed only by one of the sects, while the others protest at being classed in the same category. Whenever Impressionism tries to simulate reality, striving for illusion, they all agree in despising this procedure. They also share in common the passionate denial of every demand that we make of a picture before we can accept it as a picture at all. Although we may not be able to understand a single one of their pictures, of one thing we may be certain, they all do violence to the sensible world. This is the true reason of the universal indignation they arouse ; all that has hitherto been the aim of painting, since painting first began, is now denied, and something is striven for which has never yet been attempted. At least so the beholder is likely to think, and the Expressionist will fully agree with him. Only the

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beholder maintains that whatever nature does not sanction, but that on the contrary deliberately goes against nature, can never be true Art, while the Expressionist insists that just this *is* Art, is *his* Art. And if the beholder retorts vehemently that the painter should express nothing but what he sees, the Expressionists assure him that they too paint only what they see. And on this point there is a continual misunderstanding. Each of them when he speaks of 'seeing' means something totally different. What is meant by 'seeing'?



### *Seeing.*

The history of painting is nothing but the history of vision—or seeing. Technique changes only when the mode of seeing has changed; it only changes because the method of seeing has changed. It changes so as to keep pace with changes of vision as they occur. And the eye changes its method of seeing according to the relation man assumes towards the world. A man views the world according to his attitude towards it. All the history of painting is therefore in a sense also a history of philosophy, especially of unwritten philosophy.

The act of seeing in a man is both passive and active. The picture changes according to whether he is more passive or more active, more sub-

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missive or more assertive; according to whether he desires more to receive with greater purity, or to respond with greater force, so does his method of viewing a picture change. Seeing consists of two activities, an outer and an inner one: one which is done to man, and the other which is performed by man subsequently, in response to it. To be able to see at all, something must first have happened outside us; this must impinge on us, a stimulus must reach us. But no sooner does this stimulus from without reach us than we respond instantly, we respond by the action of the eye. It not only submits to the stimulus, it not only receives it, it not only lets it happen, but it acts instantly upon it; it takes it up, it announces it to us, it hands it on to our mind. The stimulus becomes sensation; the sensation becomes conscious and inserts itself into our thought. Plato knew that the eye is not quiescent during experience, but parries at once in return, he speaks of a fire which streams from the eye (in the *Timæus*) and Goethe too refers to the 'spontaneous activity' of the eye, to its 'independent life,' to its 'reaction to the outwardly visible,' to the 'seizing of objects by the eye.' By the time we become conscious of the stimulus, the eye has already transformed it, it bears our impress, is already half our own. And no



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differ for each individual according as his own share is stronger or weaker, the capacity of his eye more or less independent; according to the degree of his attention, the extent of his experience, the power of his thought, the range of his knowledge. As any one of these conditions changes, necessarily every appearance will change with it. A man is usually unconscious of these various conditions. But it may happen at times that he feels them strongly, and then it may also happen that he wishes to change them. As soon as he realises that his seeing is always the result of some external influence, as well as of his own inner influence, it depends on whether he trusts the outer world more—or himself. Every human relation finally depends on this: once he has arrived at the stage where he can differentiate between himself and the rest of the world, when he can say 'I' and 'you,' when he can separate outer from inner, he has no alternative but that of flight from the world into himself, or from himself into the world—or a third choice is possible, that of halting on the boundary line between the two. These are the three attitudes man can assume towards the phenomena of appearance.

When at the dawn of time man first awakened, he was startled by the world. To recover himself, to 'come to,' he had to sever himself from nature ;



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in his later memory this event is echoed and repeated in the impulse to break away from nature. He hates her ; he fears her ; she is stronger than he ; he can only save himself from her by flight, or she will again seize and devour him. He escapes from her into himself. The fact of having the courage to separate from her, and to defy her, shows him that there must be a secret power in himself, and to this power he entrusts himself. From its depths he draws his own God and sets him up against nature. He requires a stronger power than himself, but stronger also than the world ; enthroned above him, and above her, it can destroy him, but it can likewise protect him against her. Should his offering find favour, his God will banish the terrors of nature. And thus primeval man draws a magic circle of worship round himself and pricks it out with the signs of his God : Art begins, an attempt of man to break the grip of appearance by making his 'innermost' appear also ; within the outer world, he has created another world which belongs to him and obeys him. If the former frightens him into mad flight, alarming and confusing all his senses—the eye, the ear, the groping hand, the moving foot—the latter pacifies and encourages him by its calm, by the rhythm and consonance of its rigid, unreal, and unceasing

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repetition of form. In primitive ornament change is conquered by rest, the appearance to the eye by the picture in the mind, the outer world by the inner man, and when the reality of nature perplexes and disturbs him because he can never fathom her depths, because she always extends further than he can reach, so that beyond the uttermost limit there stretches something beyond, and beyond this extends the threat of yet further vastness—Art frees him by drawing appearance from the depths and by flattening it out on a plane surface. Primeval man sees lines, circles, squares, and he sees them all flat, and he does so owing to the inner need of turning the threat of nature away from himself. His vision is in constant fear of being overpowered and so it is always on the defensive, it offers resistance, is ready to hit back. Every fresh outer stimulus alarms the inner perception, which is always armed and ready, never concedes entrance to nature, but out of the flux of experience he tears her bit by bit—banishing her from the depth to the surface—makes her unreal and human till her chaos has been conquered by his order.

It is not only primeval man who shows us this determined reaction of repulsion to every stimulus experienced. We recognise this attitude again in one of the highest phases of human development,

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in the East. There too man, now mature and civilised, has overcome nature. Appearance has been seen through and recognised as illusion, and should the deceiving eye try to entice him into this folly, he is taught by knowledge to withstand. In the East all beholding is tempered by an element of comprehending pity, and wherever the wise man gazes, he sees only that which he knows · the eye takes in the outer stimulus, but only to unmask it instantly. All seeing, for him, is a looking away from nature. We, with our eyes, are still incapable even of imagining this state, for we still see everything, as far as the circle of our civilisation reaches, with the eyes of the Greek.

The Greeks had turned man about : he stood against nature, they turned him towards her : he hid from her, they taught him to confide himself to her, to go with her, to be received by her, to become one with her. It must have been a great moment. We still have witnesses of its greatness: in Munich the Apollo of Tenea and some of his companions in the Mycenaean room of the British Museum and many more in the first hall of the National Museum at Athens. Images of Gods, they are in the ancient style, erected by the fear of man for a protection from the outer world, as a comforting sign of an inner one.

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And now while a younger generation endeavoured to copy this inherited God of its fathers, a new sense began to stir within it urging it to unfaithfulness to old traditions, and the hand that was to copy, to repeat the old symbol of Divinity, yielded to seduction. It drew its God no longer out of the depths of the human heart, it reached outwards to find him; nature penetrates and enlivens its work; here an arm appears, there a shoulder frees itself; that which was rigid stirs again, it awakens; there is no longer any God, he has become man, and with him man has become nature. The Greek arrives at an intimacy with nature; she loses her terrors for him; he makes his peace with her and in giving himself to her he hopes to control her. The gods wander out into the fields and woods; in geometrical ornaments the plant flowers and the animal moves. God and man and even animals mingle and become one. The classic man arises who, according to Goethe, 'knew himself to be one with the world, and therefore does not look upon the objective outer world as something foreign to him, that confronts his inner world, but recognises in it rather the response to his own sensations.' Western history has been busy ever since, developing this classic personality. Now and then the dim recollection

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of primeval times cropped up and threatened the classic development—it only became all the stronger. Then Christianity appeared with its deep mistrust of nature, with its blissful message of a supernatural home—yet the classic tradition still maintained its hold. Western civilisation has kept the classic point of view, is still developing its faith in nature, and while it lasts man ever turns from the inner world towards the outer world. He becomes more and more eye; and the eye becomes always more passive, always less active. The eye no longer possesses a will of its own, it abandons itself to the stimulus until it becomes at last completely passive, a mere echo of nature. Again Goethe asks: ‘What is beholding without thinking?’ We have experienced it and are therefore qualified to answer: ‘It is Impressionism.’

In fact, the Impressionist is the consummation of classic development. The Impressionist, in visualising, endeavours as much as possible to rule out every inner response to the outer stimulus. Impressionism is an attempt to leave nothing to man but his retina. One is apt to say of Impressionists that they do not ‘carry out’ a picture; it were better to say, they do not ‘carry out’ visualisation. The Impressionist leaves out man’s participation in appearance, for fear of falsifying

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it. Every intelligent look 'theorises' at once ; it no longer contains only the pure stimulus, it contains also a human addition, and the Impressionist mistrusts nature. Therefore, the Impressionist wants to surprise nature before she has become humanised, he goes back to the first moment of sight, he wants to trap the impression at the instant of its first contact with us, at the very moment it first impresses us, while it is in process of turning into a sensation. 'Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without conception are blind,' says Kant. Only when the outer force comes into contact with our inner force is the appearance begotten ; and it is this moment of first contact, of birth, of impression, that the Impressionist wants to catch, when the impression that we receive startles our activity, but our advancing activity has influenced and transformed that impression. A moment sooner and intuition would be blind. It only becomes vision when it has been breathed upon by thought. A moment later and it would no longer be pure ; in that moment in which intuition becomes vision, in which we remove the cataract, the Impressionist catches it. Schopenhauer says : 'Of all our senses the most capable of taking in delicate and manifold impressions, is sight. Yet in itself

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it can only yield sensation, and this does not become intuition until reason has been applied to it. If a person, standing in front of a wide and beautiful prospect, could be for a moment completely bereft of his reason, nothing would remain with him of the whole scene but an impression of a very complicated affection of his retina, like the many patches of colour on a palette, which are, as it were, the raw material out of which our reason created the intuition.' Impressionistic 'seeing' could not be better described. It is the act of seeing during a period in which man trusts in his senses alone, and mistrusts any manifestation of other powers within him: he clings to Goethe's words: 'The senses do not deceive, the mind does.' To Impressionism man and the world have become completely one; to Impressionism only sense-impressions exist. He who presumes to demand a carrier for this conglomeration of sense-impressions, and so infers from that to an 'I,' is already entangled in mythological cobwebs. 'Nothing can save the "I,"' says Ernst Mach, Impressionism's acutest thinker. Its 'I' has vanished, and with it the world has vanished also; nothing remains but the sense-illusion of impressions. To assume that there is need of a cause, nay, even of two causes, and that by their

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encounter its sense-illusion arises, is, according to Impressionism, an unjustifiable and arrogant presumption of reason. It dissolves man completely in nature, and it finds that thereby nature too has become dissolved. Goethe says: 'Appearance is not severed from the observer, but it is rather entwined and enmeshed in his individuality.' The Impressionist, confidently pursuing the path of the Greeks to its very end, tries to sever the appearance from the observer. The result is that both die out.

This saying of Goethe about the appearance being entwined in the individuality of the observer describes the third attitude a man may take up towards the world. It becomes possible when a man considers himself as a part of nature and yet not only natural, but rather as an intermediary between two realms, to whose mutual influences his existence is due. He then turns towards the world and gives himself confidently to it, though never without simultaneously responding to it from within himself, and putting his own powers against those of the outer world. He assumes both the female and the male attitude, conceiving and begetting: he suffers it, and yet forms it. Once the original fear of outer nature has been conquered and before man has been led by the



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disillusion of his pride to doubt his inner powers—this is the balanced attitude of all those who are not corrupted. Unintentionally they breathe the world in, and breathe it out again transformed by their breath, without, of course, becoming conscious of the fact that what they call the outer world has really been created by themselves. It is strange that a thing which in practice every one effects should be so difficult to understand in theory. Of all the Greeks, Plato alone knew this. The German, Meister Eckart, wrestled with it; Kant was the first to pronounce it clearly; Goethe the only one to experience it in its purity consciously: 'All those who cry up experience exclusively, fail to consider that experience is but the half of experience.' Thus he wards off all Impressionism of life, of science, of Art, and yet knows how to guard himself from complete Expressionism (which again seeks to dominate the outer world by the inner powers inherent in man), by preserving his imperturbable and happy balance towards the senses. The average man possesses, though only in a blunted way, a perception wherein the influence of the outer powers has come to terms with the counter-influence of our inner power, where the stimulus is met by an inner response. The ordinary man usually sees

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more correctly than the artist ; artistic perception is nearly always attained at the expense of correct vision, which can only be regained on the highest rung of that ladder. Artistic vision depends on an inner resolve : the eye of the body conflicts (to speak like Goethe) with the eye of the spirit, and only by the way in which a man decides the issue of opposing forces does he truly become an artist. But how many have ever endured fully ? Endured and gone on painting ; for only when the strife had been outlasted could their best work really begin. This was, perhaps, what the Japanese painter meant when he said that before a man is ninety he is not able to guess even how much he can do.

To reach the exact point of balance between Impressionism and Expressionism, that point of full vision which neither allows man to be overborne by nature, nor nature by man, but concedes their full due both to the work of nature and to the act of man—this true point of balance is perhaps more likely to be attained by the artist either in times which have tended to an entirely one-sided development, and have then been violently assaulted by the other view (Grunewald, Dürer, Cézanne), or again when a very obstinate period is opposed by the artist's own headstrong will

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and view (Greco, Rembrandt). (To such of my readers as have not already noticed it, let me say that I am indebted to our late great researcher, Alois Riegl, and also to Wilhelm Worringer's *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* and *Formprobleme der Gotik* for many of my views, and that Chamberlain's book on Goethe first taught me to understand Goethe by Kant).



### *Who is Riegl?*

You ask, who is Riegl? The reader may have heard of Worringer, but of Riegl he knows nothing. And I cannot blame him, for even the smaller Brockhaus, the latest edition (in 1914), does not know Alois Riegl, just as he had never heard of Franz Wickhoff, two of Austria's greatest historians of Art, who have altered the history of Art from its very foundations, transforming it in a certain sense for the first time into a science; yet to Brockhaus they are unknown. After all, this does not really matter very much, for even if their names are unknown, or forgotten, their thoughts are very much alive; one feels their influence in all directions; they penetrate everywhere, and scarcely a book on Art appears which is not consciously or unconsciously the result of their spirit—nor should

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the mouthpiece through which truth speaks receive undue attention. Both Wickhoff and Riegl belonged to Upper Austria, which breeds that special type of character that prefers to arrive at its own conclusions independent of outer influence, and having done so is apt to hide its head so as to be troubled no further in the matter. If the light of earthly immortality does not illumine the names of these two, what matter?

Riegl died in 1905 at the age of forty-seven. He had been attached to the Austrian Museum for eleven years, and at the time of his death he held the position of General Keeper of the Central Commission for the Discovery and Maintenance of Works of Art, at the Austrian Museum ; he seemed born to be its head, and for that reason never became so. From 1895 he had lectured at the Vienna University on the history of Art, and it is he who broke Semper's hold on German thought. Semper explained the style of a period by technical considerations ; for him a Work of Art was the mechanical result of utility, raw material, and technique. And to his definition German criticism still clung (in so far as it demanded any explanation and was not mere iconography) until Riegl appeared. He revolted against this 'dogma of materialistic metaphysics,' and to save himself

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from such a mechanical explanation this pure child of spirit had the courage to venture a teleological one; he traced every work of Art back to a definite conscious expression of the will-to-art; for him all history of Art is the presentation of artistic expression in the course of its various stages. Utility, raw material, and technique do not possess for him the positive creative rôle that Semper accords them, but only exercise a 'hindering negative one; they form, as it were, the frictional coefficient element within the whole product.'

This was Riegl's first great contribution; he taught us once more to differentiate between Art and handicraft. He has freed Art from the extrinsic aim to which it seemed to be enslaved. He liked to quote the title of a lost manuscript of St. Augustine, *De pulchro et apto*, from which he concluded that even St. Augustine separated Art from all extrinsic purpose, be it the purpose of utility or of representation. And this to Riegl was the beginning of all knowledge of Art. His whole account of St. Augustine's æsthetics is excellent; it is contained in the important closing chapter of his *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*. In this chapter one finds unexpectedly all one needs to know of Art, all that enables one to realise Art as a living reality.

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Yet there is another and even more important contribution of Riegl's. He was the first to recognise that up, or rather down, to himself all history of Art had been entirely subjective, for Art had so far been judged by minds biassed and opinions prejudiced by education along so-called classic lines, which therefore sought to measure each work of Art, to whatever period it might belong, by Greek standards. It was judged simply according to whether it approached Greek standards or not, without taking into consideration its own purpose and the purpose which it sought to fulfil to realise itself. Riegl therefore acknowledges no 'decline.' He made the liberating statement that 'history knows no decline,' and he has announced his conviction 'that in development there is not only no regress but no arrest.' Through this great conception of Art he became the discoverer of late Roman Art, which until then had remained grotesquely misunderstood and classed as 'decadent' or 'barbarised' (by the penetration of Barbarians into the Roman Empire in the time of Marcus Aurelius and onwards). It was scornfully neglected till Riegl first recognised in its despised 'lifelessness and lack of beauty' a natural and necessary expression of a great inevitable doom, which from the very beginning was the

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predestined fate of Greek Art, and which, in the interests of all future developments of Art, was as necessary as Christianity was to the general development of human civilisation.' Of course every true artist has it, but no Art-critic before Riegl held it, not even Burckhardt; we have but to remember Burckhardt's shocking attitude towards Bernini's Teresa—a supreme work of Art—or towards Tintoretto. For just by this despised 'lifelessness and lack of beauty' it came about that 'the antique barriers set up by the negation of space were broken down and the way opened for the accomplishment of a new task—the representation of the single form in infinite space.' But this each one has to discover for himself in that book, which to me at least is perhaps more exciting than any other since Goethe's *Farbenlehre*, which it also resembles somewhat in style; discoveries of such magnitude as to make one inclined to gasp are proclaimed with the greatest *sangfroid*, almost indifferently, casually, are often contained in mere notes, as if it went without saying that they were well known and obvious to every one.

Riegl was the colleague of Wickhoff, the discoverer of Julian-Flavian-Trajan Art. They both worked at the Vienna University from 1895, the time when Hugo Wolf was still alive; when

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Burckhardt was rejuvenating the Burgtheater and Mahler the Opera ; when Hofmannsthal and Schnitzler were young ; Klimt maturing ; when the secession was beginning ; when Otto Wagner was founding his school ; Roller, the 'malerische Theater' ; when Olbrich, Hoffmann, and Moser created the Austrian school of applied Art ; when Adolf Loos and Arnold Schonberg appeared ; Reinhardt dreamed, unknown, among the quiet byways of the future ; when Kainz returned ; Weininger went out in flames ; Ernst Mach held his popular scientific readings ; Joseph Popper wrote his *Phantasies of a Realist* ; and Chamberlain, fleeing from the distractions of the world, came to our kindly city and here wrote his *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* . . . Those must have been wonderful days in Vienna !



### *The Eye of the Spirit.*

According to the attitude a man assumes towards appearances—either thrusting them from him, or abandoning himself entirely to them, or finally, while conceding full consideration to appearances, allowing to his own interpretation equal rank—according to the attitude he assumes, his whole point of view changes. He sees either



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purely with the eye of the spirit, or purely with his bodily eyes, or he may see both with physical and spiritual sight simultaneously.

When Sir Francis Galton died on the 17th January, 1911, Germany knew little about him, and his science of Eugenics was just beginning to spread imperceptibly. Heinrich Driesmann expressed the spirit of this science exceedingly well when he said that while it was of great importance that a man should be well educated, it was of greater importance that he should be well born. It was the life-problem of Sir Francis Galton to find out how humanity could be born better. He was a grandson of Erasmus Darwin; was born at Birmingham; studied medicine; travelled in Africa, with the truly English aim of becoming well acquainted with the world and its inhabitants; all of his intelligent curiosity turned at the time, with open eyes and ears, more towards the outer world than towards his inner life, for there would be time enough for that when he had finished getting into touch with the different species of humanity. Thoroughly competent in geography, well versed in anthropology, he returned and put the fruit of his labour into important writings. In foreign countries he had observed the characteristic differences of various

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racés, and this enabled him to note carefully the great differences of type even amongst people of the same race, differences of body and soul. The question as to the cause of these differences, as to their origin, their persistence, was urgent, and once he had reached this point he was already on the way towards that other question, to the elucidation of which he devoted the whole of his powers, his great patience, and the pedantic exactitude of the Englishman. The question he was trying to solve was whether, as man can change constantly, we may not possess the means whereby to change him according to our will, and, as we have long been in the habit of doing with plants and animals, at last to breed mankind intelligently. He examined and observed and questioned. He lectured and wrote to the papers and made reports for scientific societies ; above all he wrote books. He became the father of Eugenics, that theory which through periodicals and congresses is gradually conquering the world (it is remarkable that, as far as my knowledge goes, no German University has yet begun to teach Eugenics). He proceeded in his thorough, always strictly inductive manner, with indefatigable patience collecting observations, heap-  
ing up experiences, noting down new data, yet without jumping prematurely at conclusions or

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venturing on hypotheses, much less forming ideas or theories, for, with a renunciation as admirable as inexplicable, he left this to future generations, his unselfish ambition being well content simply to furnish them with all possible material. His chief work is *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* (which appeared first in 1883 and can now be had in the Everyman Library).

In this book one chapter deals with inward visualisation. It investigates the capacity of some people to see objects that are familiar to them, at will, even when these objects do not confront them, or with closed eyes; not therefore as the result of outer impression, but by their own power of will. Galton investigated amongst people of all ranks and kinds, scholars, artists, men, women and children, and found that this faculty was not a universal gift. Some were without it, and could not understand what he was driving at in his questions. It seemed to them merely a figure of speech when any one spoke of seeing with the mind's eye, to take it literally would be self-deception. Nearly all men of science gave this answer. He found further that this faculty did not always appear in the same degree. Its strength, clearness and distinctness varied with each subject. Some, especially women, also most

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children, declared they were able to see with the eye of the mind whatever was familiar to them, their living-room, or parents, or teacher, friend, home scenery, &c., whenever they wished to do so, and to see them as distinctly and exactly as if beholding them with open eyes. If he seemed to doubt this they could hardly understand him, so obvious and natural did it seem to them, though people lacking this faculty found it impossible to realise its existence. They submitted willingly to his tests, answering without hesitation, and were annoyed if he suggested that this might all be a matter of memory only and not of actual seeing. They swore it was an actual viewing of a scene : 'I can see my breakfast-table, or any equally familiar thing, with my mind's eye quite as distinctly in all particulars as if the reality were before me.' Any difference between pictures seen by the mind's eye and the outer pictures that strike the physical eye, any difference in sharpness, any uncertainty or unreality they utterly denied. Others again admit a difference ; either the mental picture was distinct only in its main features and lacked detail, or was faint, unsteady, and blurred ; or they said, that only by an effort could it be gradually cleared and finished ; or that the details had to be filled in again repeatedly. To yet others these pictures

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remained altogether like shadows, so that one person declared it could hardly be called a picture of the mind at all, but rather a symbol. To one public speaker this *seeing* was so concrete that he would write out his speech and leave the manuscript at home, and yet he would see it distinctly before his mind's eye, word for word, so that he would actually hesitate each time he came to an indistinctly written word or a word crossed out or blurred in this absent manuscript. In the same way another, when playing from memory, said he actually saw the music before him, even turning the pages in his mind. It was established that this difference in the pictures of the mind in no way depended on or was influenced by the physical power of vision; one who is only aware of the faintest pictures may have exceedingly good physical sight, and again one who is very short-sighted may have very clear mental pictures. It is also a mistake to infer that one who had vivid mental pictures and might therefore possess vivid imagination, was given to vivid dreaming. Nor could there be found any connection between mental pictures and memory. One person might have a bad memory for people and yet have the power at will to see with his mind's eye so distinctly that he could draw the portrait of

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some one whom he might fail to recognise in the street. To emphasize the fact that there is no difference of intensity between the picture before the mind's eye and the reality, the expression was frequently used : 'It was so distinct I could have drawn it.' A painter who wanted to explain how clear his mental pictures were, expressed himself like this : 'The pictures before my mind's eye are so distinct that even if I could not draw, I would imagine I could draw them.' This can only mean that the man who knew how to draw thoroughly, knew also that, in spite of their strong clarity and vivid presence, these mental pictures lacked that something needed to draw from.

This reminded Galton of the faces we at times see in glowing embers so distinctly that we could paint them, but as soon as we try they vanish. There must therefore be some difference between the inner and outer vision-power of these people, and the more Galton enquired, the more curious were the details of the mental pictures he collected. Some, it seemed, could behold more with the mind's eye than the physical eye could ever see ; the mental-picture at times contained more than could be found in the sensible one. The mind's eye can see simultaneously things which the physical eye perceives one after another ; the

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mind's eye will see all four walls of a room, all the faces of a cube, a whole sphere at one glance. With the mind's eye they see so to speak all round the object, they describe it as a kind of touch-sight, which we may interpret in this way, that when seeing with the mind's eye their spirit seems as it were to touch as much as to see the thing ; or we should have to assume that time is eliminated. Some go as far as to be able to see themselves beside their wife and children at table, and can see not only the things on the wall in front, but those on the wall behind them. This seems to prove that the power of seeing with the mind's or the spirit's eye, which nearly all children and some grown-up people have, is more than a mere remembering or reproducing of objects and scenes viewed with the physical eye, that it is a kind of individual production, that spiritual sight is a kind of creative power belonging to a different world with different laws from those which rule the world we behold with our physical sight. If then we look with the mind's eye at that which we usually see with the bodily eye, we behold a world which, compared with the latter, seems to us abnormal and distorted because it differs from it. Any one who has this power of spiritual sight, views an entirely different world from that which

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his physical eye beholds, and also different from that which is beheld by another possessing the same faculty. Each person differs from another far more widely in the manner of his mental vision than in the manner of his bodily vision. It is far more individualised than physical sight, because the individual plays a larger part in the inner act of seeing than in the outer. The bodily eye is essentially passive, it is receptive, and what is done to it by the external stimulus is stronger than its inward activity, stronger than its own reaction to the challenge ; whereas the mind's eye is always active, and the reflections of reality are simply material it makes use of. This becomes clearer to us if we give our mental vision free rein and observe precisely what its inherent powers produce without forcing any voluntary recollections upon it, without suggesting its procedure. Let us follow Goethe's example and close the bodily eyes and wait patiently for what happens. In an essay which he wrote in 1819 on Purkinje's *Subjective Vision*, he described his own inner vision precisely. He was always very definitely aware of what he called 'the eye's own independent life' (which led Schopenhauer to speak of the 'actions of the eye'), its 'activity,' its readiness to 'produce colours of its own.' Indeed, when he speaks of the eye he



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seems almost to be speaking of a separate living person; it insistently requires a change of condition, it cannot and will not abide in any one 'identical position,' it is rather 'necessitated to a sort of opposition' which strives towards completeness and 'enjoys an agreeable sensation when something harmonious with its own nature is presented to it from without.' He never wearies of pointing to this twofold activity of the eye: 'The ear is dumb, the mouth is deaf, but the eye both perceives and speaks. In it is mirrored the world from without—and the man from within. The inner and the outer worlds are synthesized by the eye into one whole.' Again and again he insists on 'the difference between the two modes of seeing; that the eye of the spirit—the inner vision—should always be linked to the physical eye in a constant active alliance, otherwise one is in imminent danger of seeing and yet of seeing past a thing—overlooking it, in fact,' for 'without using the eye of the spirit we but grope about in the dark.' Therefore he agrees fully with Purkinje who accords the eye its own 'power of imagination' as a part of the 'general power of the soul.' And this causes Goethe to describe his own inner sight. He says: 'I had the power, when closing my eyes and bending forward my head, of imagining a

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flower in the centre of my organ of vision, but this flower did not keep its original form, it unfolded in many colours, or at times only in a sequence of green leaves ; these were not natural flowers, but had all kinds of fantastic shapes, yet symmetrical like the rosettes of sculpture or stone carving. It was impossible to fix this ever welling-up creation, but it would last as long as I wished, neither increasing nor decreasing in clarity. I could produce the same effect when I thought of some ornament on a coloured disk, which would in the same way flow in constant change from the centre to the circumference, exactly like that invention of to-day, the Kaleidoscope . . . Here the phenomena of reflection, memory, productive imagination, concept and idea are all brought into play at the same time and manifest themselves in the inherent activity of the organ with complete freedom and without purpose or guidance.' With this curious narrative of Goethe's many of Galton's observations agree most surprisingly, especially the communications made to him by the Rev. George Henslow about his 'visions,' appearances of inner pictures, which did not obey his will, but came unasked. His procedure is the same as Goethe's. He too closes his eyes and waits, only he starts by not trying to picture anything and lets his inner

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eye produce what it chooses. Very soon a picture appears before him, quite clear, but usually differing in some way from reality 'not quite natural in shape, somewhat different from the real thing.' Like Goethe, he too cannot 'fix' the appearance, it changes ceaselessly, it flows on. He had tried to guide these changes by his will with varied success. At times he was able to bring the changing pictures back to their original form, so that a sort of visual cycle was formed. He describes one such occurrence. He sees a cross-bow which is soon provided with an arrow; the hand of an invisible person appears and shoots off the arrow; the whole space is filled with a flight of arrows, which turn into falling stars; these almost immediately change into snowflakes, snow covers the ground, a rectory appears covered with deep snow; then spring comes; the sun shines on a bed of tulips which the clergyman remembers from the days of his childhood; the tulips vanish, all but one, which becomes doubled and its petals fall away, leaving only the pistil; a swollen and blown-out pistil, on which horns grow, which in a sequence of changes becomes a pin, a pencil, assumes various unrecognisable forms, and then returns to the likeness of the bow to which Mr. Henslow intended to guide back his original

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picture; and really, though with some difficulty, the original picture has come back. He has tried to draw this diorama of a very eccentric kind and Galton's book contains the drawing.

Any one who will take the trouble to experiment in this way with the inner seeing power, will learn thereby to understand in a new way the development of formative Art. Its history consists of periods which entrust themselves to the inner vision (as all primitive and all Oriental Art does) alternating with periods which give the physical eye pre-eminence, as does Greek Art from the Apollo of Tenea, and every Art which is in any way modelled on or derived from the Greek. There are, however, periods where the outer vision struggles against the inner, and Art cannot incline definitely towards either, as in Gothic sculpture and in Baroque Art, and in that concealed Baroque style of the Impressionists mentioned by Meier-Graefe. It may also happen that a balance is attempted, a compromise arrived at, and the inner and outer seeing powers tend to unite; neither is able to predominate and crowd out the other, but each is able to maintain itself and to let the other live also; nay, even to interpenetrate the other and amalgamate with it, and in losing itself, really finds itself more fully than before

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(Leonardo, Rembrandt, Cézanne). Yet even in great works of Art there are places where one is aware of some disproportion, some incongruity, as if here in a sort of violence and agony one had been switched into some other element. Hence the almost eerie quality of these works. Goethe, discussing the difficulty of combining idea and experience, is of opinion that 'there is a certain gap found between idea and experience, to cross which all our efforts seem vain'; and this he calls a 'hiatus.' One cannot find a better expression for that painful and yet challenging trait, owing to which the greatest works of figurative Art seem at certain places to gape—not to close properly—indeed, there are places where they threaten to fall apart.

If painters who let the eye of the mind predominate bring their work to a public which is accustomed to trust the physical eye only, or *vice versa*, one can imagine the confusion which ensues. He who has never watched his own visual powers is in any case inclined to take the eye for a window through which the world looks at him. Add to this, that we have been brought up on the lines of classic Art, an art which only looks outwards, always absorbing the outer world. Impressionism is but the last word of classic art, it completes and fulfils it entirely by increasing the outer vision to

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its highest possibilities, eliminating the inner as much as possible, by always seeking to weaken the 'own individual life' of the eye, its independent action, its will, and so makes man a complete *passivum* of his senses. *Mais moi-même je n'existais plus, j'étais simplement la somme de tout ce que je voyais*, by which Barrès describes the whole position of Impressionism.

But nowadays the artist and the layman seem gradually to have forgotten that man possesses a spiritual eye. There are exceptions of course, like Klimt and Hodler, who, though making use of many of the technical usages of Impressionism, have never painted a picture that was not the product of a personal volition. To-day, among the rising generation, the mind seems to insist passionately upon its part. It turns away from the outer impression of life and hearkens for the inner concealed voices, and asserts once more that man is not merely an echo of his world, but rather perhaps its creator, in any case its co-equal in power. Such a generation will, of course, disown Impressionism and demand a form of art which again sees with the mind's eye, which beholds with the eye of the spirit — therefore Impressionism is followed by Expressionism, which is just as biassed, just as one-sided, again disowning one side of human nature,

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again stating only half the truth. The whole truth seems but to flit past man for the duration of a breath, and again he veers from one error to another.



### *The Music of the Eye.*

In the *Wahlverwandschaften* we read how Ottilia at night, in that peaceful state between sleeping and waking, often saw Edward, who was far away, 'quite distinctly, and not dressed as she was accustomed to see him, but clad in warlike garments and always in a new position, which however was quite natural each time and not the least phantastic; she saw him standing, walking, lying, riding.' One takes it calmly, for after all this is but a novel. We see how artistically-minded we are, when we insist seriously that the poet does not really mean what he says (as when the attitude is taken in the Catholic conclusion of *Faust*, that the poet is only romancing). Therefore when Goethe describes his own visions it does not impress others deeply. We usually accuse the English of all being mildly insane, so that if they confess to having visions at times, one takes it as part of their vagaries. Inner visions are not countenanced by our 'culture.' They belong to the dark middle ages. I experience this again and

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again in the typical discussions on Expressionism. These discussions run something like this : Some one says : 'God knows I had gradually got hardened to everything, I was prepared to accept anything—but Picasso ! He really is just about the last straw !' (in such cases they always say 'just about.')

I ask 'Why?' He explains : 'We stood it as long as we could suppose that these productions were meant to be pictures. But these things cannot possibly be taken for pictures. Unless actually told so, one would never guess it.' And he demonstrates to me how these pictures deviate from every single quality which we are accustomed to find in a picture. We had grown accustomed to find every extreme pushed to a further extreme, each beyond superseded by a new beyond, every excess as it were exceeded ; yet something was left from which such excess proceeded, which one exaggerated, the extremity of which one overreached, there was a common beginning, to which each end pointed back : before Cézanne one found Monet and preceding him Manet and Courbet ; Delacroix seemed the ancestor of the whole family and in Goya and Velasquez, in Vermeer and Tintoretto one found a dawning indication of the later artists enumerated above. Yet in the pictures of the Expressionists there is nothing parallel to



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this ; for here development no longer develops even into the absurd, but suddenly breaks off and threatens to topple the whole Art into a bottomless pit. 'There is no connecting link left with what we have hitherto been accustomed to call Art, and every criterion, every standard is lacking by which we usually take our bearings when confronting a picture. Where in God's name have you ever seen the like of this before?'

I always answer soothingly : 'Possibly the painter sees it like that?' Whereupon fresh ire falls upon me. 'No, that is impossible. No one can see it in that way. Surely you do not seriously contend that any one can see like that?'

I however persistently maintain : 'I can well imagine a person seeing in that way, not by submitting to the outer stimulus, but according to an inner vision.' And then I usually find that my companion has nothing more to say, and stares at me in alarm as if I had suddenly gone mad. He will never believe that we can see when there is nothing outside us to see, that we can see with closed eyes ; that we can have visions, apparitions, sensations of the eye without extrinsic stimulation. 'Yes, when one is ill,' says he, and is surprised that I contradict him and still maintain that quite healthy people can have visions and even offer to

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prove it to him by his own eyes ; until I at last play my trump card and quote Johannes Muller's *Physiologie des Gesichtsinnes*, and his smaller work, *Über die phantastischen Gesichtserscheinungen*. These books appeared in 1826 and have not yet been equalled, much less surpassed.

Johannes Muller was born in 1801 in Coblenz, and was Professor of Anatomy and Physiology in Berlin from 1833. He may be looked on as the father of Histology and the founder of deep-sea research ; and was the teacher of Virchow, Du Bois Reymond, and Haeckel. He must have possessed a remarkably genial, an almost magic personality. Haeckel had the portrait of his beloved master hanging over his table at the Institute at Jena and used to say : ' When at times I grow weary over my work, I need only look up at it to gain new strength.' All through life he never forgot the ' tremendous impression ' which the mysterious almost supernatural personality made on him as a lad. None of his pupils ever forgot Müller, for he possessed the gift of helping each to find himself and to draw out strength and power from within. (Bolsche has described him well in his book on Haeckel.) In him the sense and intellect were so evenly balanced that he could be relied on not to be clogged by

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empiricism, nor to fly off on the wings of his idealism. He was influenced, brought up one might say, by Kaspar Friedrich Wolff, Goethe, and Humboldt, and learnt from them that in science it is not the amassing of experiences which counts, but rather a true spirit which, however much we gather experience from without, adds a greater experience than that which 'is visibly, sensibly cognisable in the things themselves'—therefore to him every experience was but a 'generating ferment of the spirit.' He did not cease to urge that 'all natural science contained a religious quality.'

Like every one who has ever got into close touch with nature, he felt himself always surrounded by mysteries; he lived among miracles. (He once said that 'nothing really miraculous had ever happened in his life; nothing at least of which one could say that it was more miraculous than the movements of one's limbs, or the power to lift and bend one's arm at will.') Thus his whole heart was attuned to Goethe. He admired him as a man of the 'finest, best-developed physical senses.' He considered Goethe's *Farbenlehre* along with Wolff's researches into generation, to be 'ferments with which one cannot come into contact without discovering their full significance; one might really consider them introductions to the

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whole of natural science,' and he dedicated to it a special section of his *Physiology of the Visual Sense*. He was the only man of his time who truly grasped Goethe's sense for nature and remained the only one until Chamberlain came. He understood the deep inner connection of the artist and the natural scientist in Goethe, both of them descend from 'the springs of plastic imagination working according to the ideal of living alternation,' and so he discovered 'the retribution of a distant ideal of natural history' in Goethe's work for natural science, which has seldom been appreciated, but was apt to be looked on as amateurish, he wrote in 1826. Even to-day we have not appreciably approached this ideal.

Johannes Muller had watched and described his own visions. As he lay, with closed eyes, on the verge of sleep, pictures would appear which moved and changed and were quite different from dream pictures, quite independent of his waking life. But at the least movement of his eyes they vanished and also at the least effort of reflection. Even during the day he beheld such phenomena provided he was quite still, and had not been eating or drinking just before. By fasting he could intensify these visions into great vividness. He quotes Cardanus (in the 18th book of the

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*De Subtilitate*), Spinoza (*Opera Posthuma: Epistola XXX*), Nicolai and Justus Moser as witnesses for such images, and he connects with this inner seeing the inner hearing of Moses Mendelssohn and Rousseau. These manifestations seem in no way strange to him. What happens to make us see? The substance of the visual sense must be excited, no matter by what, or whether from without (by light, as we are in the habit of calling the power that arouses light, whilst he prefers to call it 'the elemental') or from within (possibly by blood pressure on the brain). 'The substance of the visual sense originates within parts of the brain itself sensitive to light, continues through the nerves of vision and ends at the retina, which alone can be affected by the elemental, whereas the inner parts can be affected by any and every organic stimulus.' What exactly do we see? 'We always see only the retina in its affected state.' All that we see is created by the eye. It only has to be stimulated and the eye lights up and shines, as the ear sounds in response to stimulation. 'The kind of stimulus is unimportant, it can only change the light-perception. There is for the substance of the visual sense no other state than that of being affected by light-perception and

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colour-perception and the state of darkness when at rest.' Therefore, even when stimulated from within, it can respond in no other way than it does to every outer stimulation—by light and colour. Whatever may happen to the eye, its mode of response can only be light and colour. If anything should happen from within us, from whatever organ it may arise, and the sympathetic effect it causes reaches far enough to touch the visual-sense substance—or, as Goethe would say, 'the eye of the spirit'—then the same response arises as would be caused by an outer stimulation : *we see*. What we see with closed eyes—streaks, mists, spots, fiery spheres, stripes of colour—they 'are nothing else but the reflex action caused by other organs, to whose every condition or state the eye can only react in light, colour, or darkness.'

To have apparitions, pictures, visions, or whatever else one may call them, we have only to imagine something with sufficient emphasis to let it penetrate to the substance of the visual sense. As soon as the waves of our inner life reach the eye we see an inner light, as we hear a sound when its waves strike against the ear. On what does the whole effect of music rest? The tones do not reach the composer from without. He does not hear the world, he hears himself, his soul

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sounds within him. That *φθόγγοι εοίκασι τοῖς τῆς κινήμασί τε καὶ παθήμασι*, the Greeks already knew. The sound which the ear produces as soon as it receives the inner movement is stored up by the artist, so that later he may conduct it outwardly to our ear, and through it to our soul. From within the artist to his ear, then the tone here produced fixed in a symbol, this symbol again translated by instruments into vibrations, these, sounding in the ears of listeners, the tones seizing the listener's soul, this is the path of music from soul to soul.

What the painters of the newest tendency strive after is, so to say, music for the eyes. They do not intend to imitate nature, and therefore one misjudges them if one compares their pictures to nature. We may as little ask them *where* they have ever seen the like in nature as we would ask the composer where he had heard his motive. He has heard it within himself; they have seen it within themselves. For him the secret power has turned into sound, for them into light; both remain equally inexplicable to our poor human intelligences, and yet the one is not more mysterious than the other. And if at times we have to doubt whether the latest painter really did see within himself that which he paints, so it is

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not always certain that the musician has really first perceived himself what he then lets us hear. At times we may happen upon smart or clever deceivers who only pretend to be Expressionists, but they are soon found out. The man who really has the visions which he paints will not lack the power to make us believe in them. In Art, after the first alarm, all falls into its accustomed place again; according to the measure of uprightness and sincerity it contains, so does its will prevail.



### *Rejoinder.*

All this our cultured friend will concede, however little it may be to his liking, all but one point, that these visions may contain something which we do not possess without them, which did not lie in our experience—in other words, that our imagination could ever create, become productive. The whole of his education is opposed to this, nor is it aware that by this attitude it opposes all Art, and in the end all truth. Against this attitude I can do nothing but appeal again to Johannes Muller, the pupil of Goethe and the teacher of Virchow and Haeckel. He says expressly: ‘The concrete which is formed from the universal, in which



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the universal is realised, may be one which had already been the object of an extrinsically conditioned sense-perception—in which case the power of imagination is reproductive—or the concrete which is formed from the universal may be a “new thing” arrived at by the limitation of the universal—then imagination is productive and creative. It is surprising that there could have been so many discussions as to whether productive imagination can create new simple presentations that are composed of fragments of appearances beheld previously. Phantasy, imagining limits in the dark visual field, can by the mere imagination of limitations devise forms in this dark field of vision, which we have never seen and never shall see objectively. All outer visible forms only appear as limitations on this dark field of vision and all sorts of limitations can be conceived in this same dark field of vision, therefore all possible forms are attainable by the imagination, even before it has found the elements thereof in the outer physical world. So we read of a flute-player who had been blinded in the first year of his life and who yet saw in his dreams horrible distorted forms.’—(Johannes Muller, *Über die phantastischen Gesichterscheinungen*,’ para. 175 and 176).

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Thus spoke Johannes Müller. And from where else could Goethe have derived his symbolic plant? One remembers the scene with Schiller. In the early days of their acquaintance they met one day at the house of Batsch after a meeting of the society for natural science: 'We happened to leave the house at the same time and began to talk . . . we arrived at his house and the conversation enticed me in. I expounded on the metamorphosis of plants, and with a few characteristic strokes of the pen I made a symbolic plant evolve before his eyes. With great sympathy and with vivid perceptive powers he took it all in, but when I had done he shook his head and said: "That is no experience, that is an idea." I pulled up, a little annoyed, for the point that separated us was hereby clearly shown. I remembered a former argument on grace and dignity and the old grudge began to stir. I controlled myself, however, and replied, "I am very glad to think that I can have ideas without knowing it, and can even see them with my eyes."'

Of course, Schiller was right; it was not an experience, it was an idea. Goethe then still in the 'comfortable assurance of his healthy human reasoning,' out of which later 'by thousands and thousands of transitional stages he developed into

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a clearer, freer self-conscious state,' did not realise this as yet. But Goethe was right in that he 'saw it with his eyes.' But again, how can eyes see ideas if they were condemned never to create, but always to reproduce experience? And whence do we derive good and evil, whence freedom, whence duty? O Kant, Kant! Since we have ceased to see the invisible with our eyes, we have lost ourselves completely.



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This is the vital point—that man should find himself again. Schiller asks: 'Can man have been destined, for any purpose whatever, to lose himself?' It is the inhuman attempt of our time to force this loss upon him against his own nature. We would turn him into a mere instrument; he has become the tool of his own work, and he has no more sense, since he serves the machine. It has stolen him away from his soul. And now the soul demands his return. This is the vital point. All that we experience is but the strenuous battle between the soul and the machine for the possession of man. We no longer live, we are lived; we have no freedom left, we may not decide for ourselves, we are finished, man is unsouled, nature is unmanned. A moment ago we

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boasted of being her lords and masters and now she has opened her wide jaws and swallowed us up. Unless a miracle happens ! That is the vital point—whether a miracle can still rescue this soulless, sunken, buried humanity. Never yet has any period been so shaken by horror, by such a fear of death. Never has the world been so silent, silent as the grave. Never has man been more insignificant. Never has he felt so nervous. Never was happiness so unattainable and freedom so dead. Distress cries aloud ; man cries out for his soul ; this whole pregnant time is one great cry of anguish. Art too joins in, into the great darkness she too calls for help, she cries to the spirit : this is Expressionism

Never has any period found a clearer, a stronger mode of self-expression than did the period of bourgeois dominance in impressionistic Art. This bourgeois rule was incapable of producing original music or poetry ; all the music or poetry of its day is invariably either a mere echoing of the past, or a presentiment of the future ; but in Impressionistic painting it has made for itself such a perfect symbol of its nature, of its disorder, that perhaps some day when humanity is quite freed from its trammels and has attained the serene perspective of historic contemplation, it may be forgiven,

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because of these shining tokens. Impressionism is the falling away of man from spirit. Impressionism is man lowered to the position of a gramophone record of the outer world. Impressionists have been taken to task for not 'carrying out' their pictures; they do not even carry out their 'seeing,' for man of the bourgeois period never 'carries out,' never fulfils life. He halts, breaks off midway in the process of seeing, midway in the process of life at the very point where man's participation in life begins. Half-way in the act of seeing these Impressionists stop, just where the eye, having been challenged, should make its reply: 'The ear is dumb, the mouth deaf,' says Goethe; 'but the eye both perceives and speaks' (*Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, Vol. V. p. 12). The eye of the Impressionist only beholds, it does not speak; it hears the question, but makes no response. Instead of eyes, Impressionists have another set of ears, but no mouth, for a man of the bourgeois period is nothing but an ear, he listens to the world, but does not breathe upon it. He has no mouth, he is incapable of expressing himself, incapable of pronouncing judgment upon the world, of uttering the law of the spirit. The Expressionist, on the contrary, tears open the mouth of humanity; the time of its silence, the

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time of its listening is over—once more it seeks to give the spirit's reply.

Expressionism is as yet but a gesture. It is not a question of this or that Expressionist, much less of any particular work of his. Nietzsche says: 'The first and foremost duty of Art should be to beautify life . . . Thereupon she must conceal or transmute all ugliness—and only after this gigantic task has been achieved can she turn to the special so-called Art of Art-production, which is but the appendage. A man who is conscious of possessing a superfluity of these beautifying and concealing and transmuting powers, will finally seek to disburden himself of this superabundance in works of Art; the same under special conditions applies to a whole nation. But at present we generally start at the wrong end of Art, we cling to her tail and reiterate the tag, that works of Art contain the whole of Art, and that by these we may repair and transform life . . . simpletons that we are!' (Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, Vol. II., p. 80). Under this bourgeois rule the whole of man has become an appendage. Impressionism makes a splendid tail! The Expressionist, however, does not throw out a peacock's wheel, he does not consider the single production, but seeks to restore man to his rightful position;

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only we have outgone Nietzsche—or, rather, we have retraced our steps and gone further back beyond him and have arrived at Goethe: Art is no longer only to ‘beautify’ life for us and to ‘conceal or transmute ugliness,’ but Art must bring Life, produce Life from within, must fulfil the function of Life as man’s most proper deed and action. Goethe says, ‘Painting sets before us that which a man could and should see, and which usually he does not see.’ If Expressionism at the moment behaves in an ungainly, violent manner, its excuse lies in the prevailing conditions it finds. These really are almost the conditions of crude and primitive humanity. People little know how near the truth they are when they jeer at these pictures and say they might be painted by savages. The bourgeois rule has turned us into savages. Barbarians, other than those feared by Rodbertus, threaten; we ourselves have to become barbarians to save the future of humanity from mankind as it now is. As primitive man, driven by fear of nature, sought refuge within himself, so we too have to adopt flight from a ‘civilisation’ which is out to devour our souls. The Savage discovered in himself the courage to become greater than the threat of nature, and in honour of this mysterious inner redeeming power of his, which, through all

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the alarms and terrors of storm and of ravening beasts and of unknown dangers, never deserted him, never let him give in—in honour of this he drew a circle of guardian signs around him, signs of defiance against the threat of nature, obstinate signs of demarcation to protect his possessions against the intrusion of nature and to safeguard his belief in spirit. So, brought very near the edge of destruction by ‘civilisation,’ we discover in ourselves powers which cannot be destroyed. With the fear of death upon us, we muster these and use them as spells against ‘civilisation.’ Expressionism is the symbol of the unknown in us in which we confide, hoping that it will save us. It is the token of the imprisoned spirit that endeavours to break out of the dungeon—a tocsin of alarm given out by all panic-stricken souls. This is what Expressionism is.

Man is, however, again reduced to one-half only of Art, though the better half. Again, he does not see completely. If Impressionism has converted the eye into a mere ear, Expressionism turns it into a mere mouth. The ear is dumb—Impressionism silenced the soul; the mouth is deaf—Expressionism cannot hear the world. Goethe says: ‘Everything within the subject is contained in the object, and something more as



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well. Everything within the object is contained in the subject, and something more as well' (*Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, Vol. II., p. 162). The Impressionist represents that something more in the Object and suppresses it in the Subject; the Expressionist knows only 'something more' of the subject and blocks out part of the object. But even as we ourselves are 'the offspring of two worlds,' so also is our eye. 'In it is the world mirrored from without, the man from within. The totality of the inner and the outer world is accomplished by the eye' (*Ibid.*, Vol. XI., p. 146, and Vol. V., Part 2, p. 12). This accomplished balance of the inner and outer is lacking both in Impressionism and Expressionism; that 'vital alliance of the eye of the spirit with the eye of the body,' to which Goethe constantly returns with urgent insistence, and which Expressionism in art, science, and life again fails to attain. When has it ever been attained? By one or two isolated masters in one or two special works, which have always remained incomprehensible and misunderstood. Never has a whole epoch attained this. One came near doing it—the Baroque ('only the badly informed and pretentious will have a feeling of contempt at this word,' says Nietzsche of the Baroque style which, by the

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way, he, following Jakob Burckhardt, also misunderstood).

This period, from the Council of Trent past Teresa and Vincent de Paul to Bernini and Calderon; this period of which a glowing foreboding already tormented the hearts of the thirteenth century, which gathered up all the longing, all the hunger for the divine and for spiritual power, of fifteen centuries, and yet in itself was but a promise of greater, more far-reaching syntheses; this period comprises every variety, from stormy movement to deepest calm, it shows us divine grace brought into contact with physical action; God held by man, man becoming the dispenser of grace from above—where becoming sinks back into being, and time abuts upon eternity—but stop!

For here I am at Bernini, of whom I hold as yet only a vision, as threatening as it is enchanting, in which St. Francis stretches his bleeding hands towards the great Dominicans, Eckhart and Tauler, and beyond them to Teresa, Calderon, and Bernini, till blinded by this flood of benediction, man, staggering back into the dark, is once more illumined by a penetrating ray from Goethe. But of course this is a Goethe we can hardly yet surmise, because we have first to learn to endure his greatness.

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### *The Whole of Goethe.*

Goethe's history has yet to be written. As each generation perceives him from a different angle, and takes from him just as much as it can use, always adapting him anew to its requirements, so every generation has remodelled its own Goethe, and if one places these different Goethes beside each other it seems incredible that all should have originated from the same man. He is always eluding his contemporaries. 'While people imagine I am still at Weimar, I have already gone to Erfurt,' he once said, and called himself 'the changing friend.' His friends could never keep up with him; scarcely did they think they had grasped him when he had eluded them again; he never let them secure their hold on him.

The friends of *Gotz* did not recognise him in *Tasso*; the most faithful of them shrank back in dismay at the *Farbenlehre*, and not long after he really seemed to be a lonely Merlin in his shining tomb. Caroline Herder complains: 'He cannot be serious, he goes too far.' And one after the other they are in sad agreement. He was so far in advance of them all that they believed they had outpaced him. A little circle of intellectual Jewesses in Berlin alone guarded his memory.

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They, too, did not recognise his real worth, but they were conscious of a feeling of tremendous mystery, and cherished it with reverence. After that arose a pert and forward generation, living only for the moment, which presumed to heal the troubles of mankind by 'constitutions'; the poet ranked only as provider of quotations for public speakers and for sport and society gatherings, or for garnishing the speeches at public banquets; for these there was little material in the *Wanderjahre* or in *Faust*. They did not know what to do with this frigid Goethe, who had gradually been severed from the jovial Goethe, the Olympian who had acquired a certain resemblance to Heyse, even to Paul Lindau, a free child of the world, enthroned high above the troubles of humanity. They turned out a sort of marble Goethe, though he was made chiefly of plaster.

The best service was rendered him unperceived by a group of Goethe scholars, at the time quite unacknowledged, or looked upon as misguided. With true German industry they collected together all the material, so that a new generation could construct out of it their own Goethe, and every following one could do likewise. The material is all there; Goethe can no longer be quite lost or mislaid; he is in no hurry and can wait. Or is

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Nietzsche right after all, and will Goethe never be really understood and appropriated by the Germans?

In the nineties it dawned on Germany that Goethe existed. This dates from the prize-essay of M. Meyers (whose wise and unbiassed book of collected facts about Nietzsche may perform the same service for him, if it influences young people to read him once more without prejudice and folly). In the nineties the generation that was coming into active life turned towards Goethe, and of course saw only itself in him. It developed the monistic Goethe in whom the headmasters gloried for a decade or so—till Chamberlain gave him the quietus. Goethe, who embraces the whole of humanity, includes of course also a monist, even as he contains the Greek, the Rococo and the Romantic period, Voltaire, Kant, and Herder, Schelling too and Hegel; mysticism, pietism and catholicism. He includes and contains them all. Should one extract out of the whole a single part, as though that alone were Goethe, one would be falsifying him, robbing him of his life, which consisted in the amalgamation and cohesion of these parts, and in making them depend on one another, and limit, and condition, and illuminate, and shade each other. If the monistic pedagogue

referred to Faust's monologue in *Wald und Höhle* : 'Erhabener Geist, du gabst mir, gabst mir alles,' he only forgets Mephistopheles' retort in which the reaction of all monistic carousings and raptures is expressed :—

In stolzer Kraft, ich weiss nicht was, geniessen,  
Bald liebewonniglich in alles überfliessen,  
Verschwunden ganz der Erdensohn,  
Und dann die hohe Intuition—  
Ich darf nicht sagen wie—zu schliessen.'

He only forgets that Goethe is not Faust, but both Faust and Mephistopheles together, and he forgets that monism is only one of Faust's phases, for he later descends to the mothers, advances to free action on free ground with free people, and ascends again supported by Angels to Heaven.

Tasting I know not what in proud elation,  
Merging oneself with all of God's creation;  
Fusing the earth-son into light,—  
And then to bring this empyreal flight  
I dare not say to *what* a termination.

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For every sentence of Goethe's which proves his monism, I can show five to prove his dualism. No child, or youth, or aged man has ever felt as strongly as Goethe how continually and urgently the physical and the spiritual worlds seek and limit and interpenetrate each other, and yet constantly lose and flee from and persecute each other as well.

There is hardly an opinion on any subject which cannot be referred back to Goethe for corroboration, but also for contradiction, and this without his contradicting himself, for he was not of one mind to-day and of another to-morrow, nor did he hold both views at the same time, but he is ever pointing to some higher point of which both, and indeed all opinions, are only inadequate portions, never attaining full activity; a point towards which all human opinion is but an insufficient striving, an uplifting and sinking of the arms in constant renewal of longing and necessity. He is therefore inclined to agree with his own Hersilie and to find in all phrases and maxims in which man tries to imprison truth 'that one can reverse each of them and they are still as true, and perhaps even truer!' (*Wanderjahre*). This does not mean that he doubts the truth. He only despairs of being able to communicate it. 'The alphabet may be a fine thing, yet it cannot express

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tones. We cannot dispense with tones, yet they are still inadequate to convey the real meaning; at the end we stick to the letter and to the tone and are no better off than if we lacked both. That which we can communicate, that which has been communicated to us, is only the most commonplace and is not at all worth our while. (*Ibid.*) But since we have no alternative but to use 'this barren material of dreary words' (unless like Montan we become entirely dumb), he tries by expressing the commonplace again and again, each time in a different way, to approach truth stealthily from different sides, and so he hopes to produce at last a feeling for the unrevealed and unrevealable. In the celebrated letter to Jacobi of January 6th, 1813, he says: 'I, with the manifold tendencies of my being, can never be content with one way of thinking; as poet and artist I am a polytheist; in my nature-studies a pantheist, and the one as decidedly as the other; the need of a personal God for my personal use has also been attended to. The things of heaven and earth together form such an extended kingdom that it requires the organs of all beings together to comprehend it.' Again in a scrap of his writing (*Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, Vol. II., p. 374), 'In our researches into nature we are pantheists,



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in poetry polytheists, and morally monists !' And again more emphatically in the *Einzelnen Betrachtungen und Aphorismen über Naturwissenschaft im allgemeinen* (*Ibid*, Vol. II., p. 163). 'Poetry points to the secrets of nature and tries to solve them in imagery. Philosophy points to the secrets of reason, and tries to solve them in words. Mysticism points to the secrets of nature and reason, and tries to solve them in words and pictures.' Each, therefore, points in its own way, using its own medium for this purpose ; each in its own way is right, yet each can only point towards, though never attain, that secret which may only be grasped by 'the organs of all beings together,' can only be expressed in the hymn of praise of the full choir of the whole creation.

We can never do more than indicate, or as Goethe also likes to express it, 'reach the primordial phenomena, at that point where they simply appear and are, and where nothing more can be said about them.' (*Farbenlehre*, Vol. I., Introduction). We are bidden to halt by these primal conditions and we may contemplate them and surmise that what they hide within them may also lie concealed in us. We may, as Goethe once wrote in his youth to Count Stolberg (*Der Junge Goethe*, Inselverlag, Vol. V., p. 309), 'in them

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touch God, the unattainable, yet every word we use is but childish lisping and babble.' We can never express the 'ever living,' yet each of us who has become aware of its presence within him, can bear witness by his deeds, can draw the blessed feeling thereof into his daily work. We can never fully recognise the truth nor express it, but we can confess our belief in it. We can feel its mystery and acknowledge it; each of us is carrying out the acknowledgment in his own way ; one in his deeds, another in his behaviour towards life, yet each always hinting at it. We may try to express it by the easily misused name of symbolism, or as Goethe preferred to say—analogy. Yet if we allow ourselves to be misled and try to take literally what is symbolical or analogical, as if in it were uttered what remains for ever unutterable, no sooner are we secure than we find ourselves lost again. Heraclitus said of the Delphic God that 'he utters nothing, conceals nothing, but only indicates' (οὔτε λέγει οὔτε χρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει—Plutarch, *De Pyth. Orac.*, p. 404 e).

Thus when Goethe speaks he wishes to utter nothing, he merely wishes to indicate the secret mystery. And for this reason he has constantly to contradict himself, for in contradiction he again indicates the mystery. His whole life consists of

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an uninterrupted series of gestures pointing to a mystery. 'To believe in God,' he once said, 'this is a beautiful and commendable word, but to acknowledge God wherever and however He may manifest Himself, this is real blessedness on earth.' His whole life was an uninterrupted process of acknowledgment, one might say of a practical worship of God.

We can reach the reflected splendour, never that which it reflects. We always attain only modifications of the unknown. As soon as we presume to grasp the unknown itself in these modifications we have added something from within us—we invent. If I wish to think of the beech-tree in the garden, I have to invent it ; it becomes only what it is through me. Even to be aware of its presence, something must have happened through me. Each time I behold it I see always other modifications, and it is by my own act that I gather all these modifications together and refer them to the self-same unknown cause. This is what Goethe means when he urges the importance of 'doing.' By doing, knowledge becomes complete : 'the half-known hinders knowledge. As all our knowledge is only half-knowledge, therefore our knowledge is ever hindering knowledge.' (*Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, Vol. X., p. 76).

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All knowledge is powerless until a potentiality is added from within us which we apply to what we wish to know. This power in us, which we send out and by which we gather in these modifications, is as unknown to us as that working behind and causing the modifications. We feel certain that these two unknown forces meet through us. Thus Goethe arrives at his special conception of a science that must be more than knowledge—which by itself is insufficient—that must therefore be more than it, namely—Art.\*

‘Neither knowledge alone, nor reflection, can produce a complete whole, because the first lacks the inner, the latter lacks the outer qualities, therefore we must of necessity think of science as an Art if we expect any kind of completeness from it—but to arrive at such a demand no single human faculty must be excluded from scientific activity—the unfathomed depths of premonition; a steadfast viewing of the present, the full stature of reasoning; clearness of understanding; mobile and sensitive imagination; affectionate appreciation of the things of the senses—nothing must be wanting in the vital seizure of the moment by

\* How completely Aryan this tenet is can be seen by the Indo-Aryan concept that ‘all busying oneself with proofs,’ i.e., just that which alone we know as science to-day, is *avidya* ‘non-knowing’ (see Chamberlain’s *Arische Weltanschauung*, p. 52).

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which alone a work of Art, whatever form it may take, can be born ('Materials for the History of the *Farbenlehre*,' in the section 'Views on the Theory and Treatment of Colour by the Ancients'). This thought, that he will allow of the exclusion of 'none of the human faculties in scientific activity,' not even fancy, recurs constantly. So he demands in almost identical words, in the essay on Stiedenroth's Psychology (*Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, Vol. II., p. 73), that the investigator 'should develop all manifestations of human nature, and reason, power of imagination and understanding, to a definite unity,' and he laughs at the man of 'so-called exact science' who, 'at the summit of his intellectual reasoning cannot easily understand that there may also exist an exact sensuous fancy, without which no Art is really conceivable.' He denies the value of experience 'as little as one will deny the creative powers of the soul by which these experiences are gathered together, are put in order and developed' (*Ibid*, Vol. II., 24). He therefore constantly asks us to remember that activities in a higher sense are not to be regarded singly, but each one as proceeding as a relay to the aid of the other, and that man should often make an alliance with himself as he does with others, and so unfold him-

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self in various capacities and practise various virtues.' (*Materialen zur Geschichte der Farbenlehre*, Konfession des Verfassers). But as soon as a man really makes this 'alliance,' and undertakes to make full use of all his capabilities and virtues, then his science has already become Art, for 'knowledge by increasing itself unconsciously demands intuition and merges into it, and however much the wise may make the sign of the cross against imagination, yet before they are aware of it they too call to their aid the help of the productive powers of imagination.' 'Vorarbeiten zu einer Psychologie der Pflanzen (*Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, Vol. VI., 302). He who does not confine himself to any one special 'manifestation of human nature,' but wants to set the whole man to work fully, soon finds himself entangled in contradictions, for though they are all manifestations of the same spirit, yet each has its own element in which it dips everything; for the eye can only see, the ear must always listen, and so an abyss yawns and the connecting bridge can only be formed by ourselves from within us. The more we task our individual powers the less we attain, until we decide upon a *coup d'état* and simply create that which is lacking.

'Idea and experience,' Goethe writes to Schopenhauer 'will never meet halfway, they can only

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be connected by Art and Action.' And in his 'Vorarbeiten zu einer Psychologie der Pflanzen' (*Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, Vol. VI., 302) he builds up a pyramid of Science : down below are the 'useful ones,' over these the 'knowing,' above these again the 'intuitive,' and on the pinnacle the 'comprehending' ones, who, in a lofty sense, might also be called the 'creative,' because they are productive in the highest degree ; for they proceed from ideas and already express the unity of the world ; 'and it is more or less the business of nature afterwards to fit into the idea.' This sounds almost like a rash pleasantry and as if Goethe was making a little hit at the 'Dogmatists of pure experience,' who always rubbed him up the wrong way. It is, however, the necessary conclusion of all Goethe's wisdom, with its glorious Kantian product. In his 'paradoxical sayings' which he used to note down during his summer excursions, with the intention later on 'to combine, and to compare the most striking contradictions' (and never found time to carry out)—in these we can as it were catch them in the making. At the head stands his chief maxim : 'Natural system—a contradictory expression. Nature has no system ; she has, she is, life and sequence from an unknown centre to an undiscoverable limit.' Then he goes

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on to speak of the 'idea of metamorphosis,' but how does he name it? A 'gift from above,' because all that he experienced, or thought, or dreamt was to him a direct gift from his genius. Then he goes on to Music, which he would make appear 'in defiance of nature.' Here we have the same thought again, as though nature must submit to man, and the immediate continuation says, 'When man appears with sufficient emphasis he assumes the attitude of legislator.' In this he expresses what he means by science (that science which in his mind he intensifies into Art): the laying down of law. It is not the question of Nature containing the law and man taking it from her, but rather of Nature receiving it from man. Of course 'our whole attention has to be concentrated on spying out the procedure of nature so as not to antagonise her by violation, but rather so as to guard ourselves from being diverted from our aim by her wilfulness.' This is entirely the position of the Artist towards his medium. The Artist too must refrain from 'compelling' his material, lest he make it stubborn, and yet he must not let himself be 'diverted from his aim' by its arbitrary wilfulness. Now we begin to understand what Goethe said on another occasion (*Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, Vol. VI., p. 348). The



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student of nature 'prefers to tarry in those regions where metaphysics and natural history overlap.' And we now also understand why he constantly advises the student to use his phantasy. 'Imagination is much closer to nature than sense ; the latter is in nature, the former hovers over her. Imagination is Nature's equal, sense is ruled by her ' (*Ibid.*, Vol. VI., 361). Instead of imagination he sometimes says 'productive imaginative power,' or 'inner productive power,' or 'faculty of ideas,' and he always means that unknown power, which enables man to express in his actions something of that secret mystery that can never really be understood. To fertilise human capabilities and virtues something has to be added—the whispered message of genius. Genius accompanied Goethe as faithfully as the guardian angel accompanies a good Catholic. No one had a more childlike trust in 'higher guidance' all through his life, no one felt more like a tool used according to a hidden plan, no one felt himself so well protected at every step ; he always looked upon himself merely as the receiver, the herald of the divine spark. He tells us calmly that it was not he who chose to investigate Optics, 'I was led into it by the genius.' He complains of the burden that he has thereby laden himself with, 'or rather my genius did it.' He is always

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merely the apparatus of his genius; what he accomplishes, is being accomplished through him, what he appears to do, is being done to him. He translates Pope Gregory's hymn to the Holy Ghost: 'The glorious hymn, *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, is simply an appeal to the genius; wherefore it speaks so powerfully to those who are rich in spirit and power.' And, however strange this may appear to us, to him all his actions in life, in Art, in science, have always been given him, infused by some higher power not his own; often asserting itself unconsciously and without his will, and overpowering him. And when he tried to treat science as Art, that only means that he was appealing as a knower as well as a creator for the help of divine inspiration.

But when the divine descends into a man, it takes on humanity, and what the divine breath does through a man takes on the features of the man in question. It becomes clouded and stained, taking on the hue of personality. 'That which creates must be greater than the creation it achieves,' says Goethe, and music tries to express supersensuous music outwardly in physical sound. If all the truth that we are capable of is always only our own deed, then every truth can only demand acceptance by its own doer—as his share

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of the divine, as the share of this one person, and no one else will be able to make anything of it for himself, but has to search for his own share. Truth is ever the same, *sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper et in saecula saeculorum*; as soon as ever truth enters a man it receives at once an addition of illusion and deception and stupidity which makes that truth visible to him; every one needs an addition, but each needs a different mixture; for each illusion, deception and stupidity must be mixed afresh. Therefore all knowledge is entirely individual, it only holds good for the one who knows it. 'I have convinced myself that each must seriously preserve his best and most precious possessions—and these will always be his own convictions—within himself; each knows for himself what he really knows, and this he has to keep a secret; as soon as he tries to express it contradiction arises, and if he enters into argument he loses his own balance, and his best, if not destroyed, becomes at all events troubled,' says Montan, and the whole of Goethe's action and influence, and his whole relation to others, rests on this foundation—he wishes to find his own truth and to let others keep theirs. Constantly changing his words he tells us repeatedly that 'each must think in his own way; for in his

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own way he will find a truth which will help him through life,' and, 'I often hold my tongue, for I do not wish to confuse others, and am quite content if they are pleased with a thing that vexes me.' And again: 'What I know well I only know for myself: expressed in a word, it is seldom helpful, often it only raises contradiction, causes a check, a standstill.' 'Our opinions are but the supplement of our existence. By the way a man thinks one can see what he lacks,' and finally: 'Originality always carries the weaknesses of the individual.' From this follows that 'the worst that can befall the scholar is that finally he must stand up by himself against the master. The more potent the mixture handed out, the greater the discouragement and despair which it produces in the recipient.' For 'Truth resembles God, it never really appears, we have to guess at it from its manifestations.' Hence Goethe's tolerance, which has nothing in common with the popular uncertain giving-way-to, even anticipating, attitude; it has no dealings with compromises or compliances, nor does it harbour a tendency to adapt oneself to others, or others to oneself, or to oppose one's own opinions against foreign ones and these against one's own until a dim compromise is produced which can no longer

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hurt any one, nor do him any good. He lets no one bargain away a jot of his opinions, but he has no wish to thrust these on others—they would no longer be his own. He holds them firmly, but only for himself, as his own property. 'Neither polemic nor conciliatory, but positive and individual' is his attitude, and so he does not overlook the fact that each of our powers, every faculty, capability, and virtue that we are gifted with is also, as it were, an original individual in us, which has its own particular truth, in which it tolerates no interference by its neighbours with their set of truths. In the same individual, eye-truth may differ from ear-truth; each sense has its own phase of truth, and the imagination has again its own particular phase, and so have reason and temperament and will, and when they all unite they together create an entirely new configuration of Truth, which each time they unite renews itself in a different manner, according to the way they blend; thus our earthly life is maintained and kept mobile until it has brought forth all the phases of truth that it is capable of producing; then it will cease. But however much they contradict, and even seem to confound one another, down in the ultimate depths they are all one and the same; this we realise as soon as we

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act. In action our inner contradictions sink into silence, and all the outer contradictions draw together for this action. We are active when we act according to our conscience, convinced of hidden, everlasting, universal Truth. Man can never know it fully or declare it, but he can show it in his actions. Wherever a dreaming mother gives her breast to her child, wherever a man draws his sword for his faith, wherever any one with a pure heart gives up his will to an inner law, there is Truth. We can never grasp or hold Truth, but we can fulfil its demands everywhere.

Even our generation may not yet be ready for Goethe in his completeness ; a Goethe whom, in more than one sense, though of course also with more than one reserve, one is almost tempted to call the catholic Goethe. Yet no other period has sampled the list of human possibilities, no other has been so disillusioned by them all ; we have probed everything and nothing has held firm under our test. At last, not even the test that nothing holds good remains. Even that holds good no longer ; it has been conquered ; it was only a side glance of truth. We have passed through every despair until we now despair of despair itself. The nearer we believed ourselves to be to truth, the further away we had drifted.

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When at last we were ready to renounce her altogether, she suddenly rose up before us with terrible certainty—in every error, in every lie we saw her distorted countenance confronting us.

So we may never wholly know her, can but acknowledge her everywhere, fulfil her always, carry her out in action. For us, naked truth is nowhere, but everything about us is her garment. Clouded by our earthly senses, we cannot behold her, but illumined by the divine spirit we can bear witness to her. Seen with human eyes everything is error, but in everything, from everything, as soon as it has been touched by the divine breath, everlasting Truth discloses her presence.  
*Imple superna gratia !*

## NOTE ON HERMANN BAHR.

**H**ERMANN BAHR was born in 1863 at Linz, a delightful old-world town on a majestic curve of the Danube in Upper Austria. He is one of the most versatile and attractive personalities of German current literature, and his career might be described as a pilgrimage from one extreme to the other, always in search for Truth, and always acquiring experience and knowledge both of the possibilities and limitations of each vantage-ground occupied. In Austria he started life as a gay and fashionable young collegian, studying philosophy, jurisprudence, and political economy. He then went to Berlin, where after a phase of anti-semitic enthusiasm, he passed through a socialistic and even a Marxian phase, and then began to realise that extremes, lacking justice, do not lead to Truth, though it took him about three years to outgrow his socialistic bias. After this, however, he once more adopted another extreme. *Æstheticism*, personal culture, and individualism claimed his full attention, and he absorbed *Strindberg*, *Ibsen*, and *Nietzsche*.

And then he went to Paris. French Art now



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became for him the marble pivot upon which all Art of the future, for a long time to come, would rest ; and to this theory he held as long as he could, even when his faith in it began to waver.

After that he returned to Berlin, and there he announced : ‘ The spirit of Art in us has now overtaken them and has gone beyond them ’ ; and this opinion he repeated in Vienna, which soon after became for a time his headquarters. In an autobiographical sketch which appeared in 1911 and which is one of his finest works, he acknowledges that his years in Berlin brought out much that was as yet dormant in him, and developed him into what he then was, though on the whole his opinion of Berlin and its attitude of taste and spirit is not very flattering.

He had by now published *Marquesa d'Amægui* and *Die grosse Sunde* (1889). The following year he published *Die gute Schule*, very much under Strindbergian influence, interlarded with Art criticisms. Strindberg's *Vater* was also apparently the grandsire of his *Mutter*. After these a comedy, *Die hausliche Frau*, and a novel, *Dora*, appeared (1893). Then Vienna began to influence him and he wrote *Neben der Liebe* (1893), a popular play, *An der Vorstadt* ; *Der Tschaperl* (1897), *Der Star* (1898), *Wienerinnen* (1900), *Franzl*, *5 Akten aus dem Leben eines guten Mannes*, *Der Krampus*

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(1901), and the Napoleonic drama, *Josephine*. After this a rather severe comedy, *Die gelbe Nachtigall*, heralded in a series of comedies dealing more or less with the problem of sex antagonism, towards which he tries to assume a certain aloof superiority. Then followed *Der Meister* (1903), *Sanna* (1905), *Die Andere* (1905), and a comedy, *Ringelspiel* (1907). Some of these works were by no means a success either in matter or form, or because of the oblique angle of vision from which they are written. After this period of irony, of deliberate and rather artificial cynicism, Bahr brought out his *Concert* (1909), possibly his most *gracile* and charming work; and then his best novels appeared *Drux* (1909), *O Mensch* (1910), where Bahr shows us 'both the old and the new forces which singly or together determine a character and mould its development.'

Quite recently a book of *Essays* (published, I believe, in 1920 or 1921) covers a wide range of most interesting subjects, and should be widely read by all who can read German, or translated for those who cannot.

The London Stage Society some time ago gave a performance in English of one of his plays which they called *The Fool and the Wise Man*.

The book now translated *Expressionism* was written when Germany was at the crisis of her

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Expressionistic fever, from which she has emerged, and should be of especial interest to the English reader now that symptoms of this phase are appearing in his own country, both in literature, drama, and other forms of Art expression.

But let us return to Bahr the man, whom we had followed to Vienna. Here he founded the periodical, *Die Zeit*, and started on a literary Bohemian Coffee-house phase (in the best sense of that expression), during which he outlived the effects of Paris and became interested in a new problem : How best to attack the Philistine ; but he was too much of an artist to content himself with this negative campaign. He needed something to be enthusiastic about, something he could love. Even in his Bohemian period he was never guilty of that sin of the small-minded, abuse of the great ones by over or under-estimation. On the contrary, in his extravagant way and wielding exaggerated superlatives, he was ever on the lookout for 'egg-dancers, fire-eaters, and knife-swallowers,' and yet admired them. Bahr the critic criticised with the admiration of Bahr the poet. People twitted him with his own words : 'The critic should be a quick-change artist, an indiarubber man, an intellectual acrobat, a serpent always slipping out of his own skin into that of every other creature, so as to give out information

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from within.' But they were unjust to Bahr. The critic pure and simple, to quote Scripture, 'lacketh love.' But Bahr 'has love,' and therefore always criticises as an artist, and his criticism is always fertile. The function of the critic is to him *au fond* merely the joy of giving tongue after the particular thing which at the moment rouses his full enthusiasm. This kind of criticism, which in his hands becomes not so much a philosophy of Art as the Æsthetic of Art, he evolves more fully in his poetic work. Therefore his criticism is never mere criticism, and his creative art not mere work of poetic value only. Hermann Bahr is one of those rare cases of a perfectly sincere artist who, when he assumes an attitude for or against a thing, does so wholeheartedly. This is the reason why Hermann Bahr remains ever young and is one of the most delightful figures of modern German literature.

He has now made his home at Munich, where his burly form, clad in Bavarian shorts and bare knees, wrapped in a voluminous cape, his long beard tossing in the wind, can be often seen striding vigorously along the streets, a familiar figure, almost a patron 'Saint' of Munich.

THE TRANSLATOR, 1924.

















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